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Mental Images in Cinema

Flashback, Imagined Voices, Fantasy, Dream, Hallucination and Madness in Film

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Mental Images in Cinema:
Flashback, Imagined Voices, Fantasy, Dream, Hallucination and Madness in Film

by

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Abstract

In this thesis we consider cinema's representations of mental images. Our central concerns are the formal aspects of the presentation of memory and imagination, and the various functions which the different types of mental images perform. While along the way we engage with a number of expedient theories, on the whole the argument is free of any over-arching theoretical approach, instead focusing largely on the evidence of the wide range of films — from different eras, genres and national cinemas — with which we engage. We begin with a consideration of filmic representations of memory, tackling such questions as: What exactly is a flashback? What different functions do flashbacks perform? What is the relationship between flashback and the mental images of memory? Identifying an inadequacy in current terminology, we here introduce the concept of 'act of memory' in order to distinguish between representations of the past which constitute an analogue of the mental images of memory and more properly subjective representations of mental images. In Part II we develop a taxonomy of the major forms of imagination. Here our discussion of imagination draws on cognitive and phenomenological theories of imagination, and the chapter on dreams draws substantially on Freud. In our consideration of the functions of the various sorts of mental images we establish a series of character types who are prone to experiencing mental images. Throughout Part II we argue that representations of mental images are often closely related to themes of madness — that many representations of mental images can be understood as traces of madness.

Contents

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Introduction

Each of us carries within us a private world, the confluence of our past experience, our libidinal drives, our intelligence: the mental images of memory and imagination. It can be a place of sanctuary, consolation, escape from the realities of life, it can be a resource which fosters pensiveness or precipitates action, but it can also oppress, torment and tyrannise. By turns an oasis or a prison, the world of imagination and memory is irreducibly subjective. To a large extent, we are responsible for our mental images — our images present to us a mirror, reflecting our past actions, decisions, our drives and passions. But our existence in society, the inevitable and necessary interaction with other people that this entails, means that there is *perforce* a significant aleatory aspect to our mental images for which we cannot, in all fairness, be responsible. (For instance, we may remember with pain something hurtful that someone once said to us. We did nothing to provoke such an insult and, we feel, we are not responsible for the fact that we have remembered it; we were reminded of it by accident.) Nietzsche has a singularly pessimistic conception of memory. Memory — or 'historical thinking' — is pernicious, a 'dark, invisible burden'.[1] Indeed, for Nietzsche, happiness is defined by

> the ability to forget or […] the capacity to feel *unhistorically* during its duration. He who cannot sink down on the threshold of the moment and forget all the past, who cannot stand balanced like a goddess of victory

[1] Nietzsche, F. (2007) 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', in Rossington, M & A. Whitehead (eds) *Theories of Memory*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (first published 1874), p.103

> without growing dizzy and afraid, will never know what happiness is — worse, he will never do anything to make others happy.[2]

But, unlike the cows grazing in the field, or the toddler bouncing on her father's knee — who exist as if immured in a perpetual present, impervious to past and future — man remains in thrall: he 'clings relentlessly to the past: however far and fast he may run, this chain runs with him'.[3]

Such mental work as remembering and imagining is in essence a solitary enterprise. While there is, to be sure, a useful function to mental imagery, it generally tends toward the foreclosure of discourse. If not beyond communication, mental images are generally opposed to it. Others remain shut off, excluded from the great majority of our remembering and imaginative work. Our images are, in any case, often of limited interest to others. The raptures, despairs, elations and anxieties of our imagination are enveloped in a carapace of silence. Our mental images are expressions of an inner realm for which we are accountable to no one but ourselves.

Topic

The subject of this thesis is the representation of mental images in cinema. The idea for the subject of the thesis was conceived after reading Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27), and Sartre's *L'Imaginaire* (1940), and by a viewing of Dennis Potter's *The Singing Detective* (1986). Sartre's early phenomenological writings will form a key point of reference throughout the thesis.

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[2] *Ibid*., Nietzsche's emphasis

[3] *Ibid*., p.102

I became interested in the flashback as a narrational device, and began to ask myself questions. To what extent has the flashback been theorised in film studies? How far back do these studies go and how exhaustive are they? What is the value of a mental image in a film? Is it merely used as a shortcut, to avoid long verbal renderings? What other functions does it perform? Are mental images primarily liberating — as in *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski, 2002), when the pianist imagines the music which would issue from the piano were he to play it — or are they fundamentally oppressive — as in *Scarlet Street* (Fristz Lang, 1945), where Christopher Cross is haunted by the ghosts of his victims, Kitty and Johnny? Do certain situations or character types lend themselves to the experiencing of mental images? These are the core questions which will be addressed in the following chapters.

When we consider how cinema has represented memory and imagination, one thing is immediately apparent: though they may prompt speech or action, mental images unfold in a private and subjective sphere, as opposed to the objective world of speech and action. There are some striking and memorable representations of characters in the act of remembering or imagining. The whole second half of *Vertigo* (1958, Alfred Hitchcock), for instance — in which, after discovering Judy, Scotty monomaniacally moulds her to his desire until finally she (physically) conforms exactly to his memory of Madeleine — is all about memory. And yet, with just two brief exceptions — their kiss, the necklace — Hitchcock forbears from offering representations of Scotty's memory. Rather, we *see him remembering*, and the onus is on James Stewart (aided by Hitchcock and Herrmann) to dramatise the act of remembering, the experience of memory (in this case a singularly uncanny experience, since Scotty believes that

Madeleine is dead) in the present. Frequently, however, we depart from the objective world of the diegesis and enter a new dimension, representing the internal thoughts of a character.

Among the first to recognise the potential of cinema for the representation of mental images were the surrealists. In 'Crossing the Bridge', Jacques Brunius writes of cinema, '[i]t is impossible to imagine a truer mirror of mental performance.'[4] Brunius criticises dualistic thinking, which understands the objective and the subjective, the real and the world of fantasy, to be separated by an unbridgeable abyss. 'Surrealism long since went beyond these attitudes [...] and threw a bridge between the seemingly most distant activities of understanding'. Film, he continues,

> enjoys an incomparable facility for crossing the bridge in both directions, thanks to the extraordinary and sumptuous solidity it attributes to the mind's creations, objectifying them in the most convincing manner, while it makes external reality submit in the opposite direction to subjectivisation.[5]

Looking back from the vantage point of the 1950s, Robert Benayoun writes,

> Every means of expression has, at one phase or another of its development, found itself faced with the dilemma its creative potential imposed on it: to represent nature in all its nakedness or to rise above it [...] through the power of illusion. Barely pubescent, the cinema found itself facing the same choice

[4] Brunius, J. (2000) 'Crossing the Bridge,' in Hammond, P. (ed.) *The Shadow and its Shadow*, San Francisco: City Lights (first published 1954), p. 100

[5] *Ibid*., p. 102

> [...] And yet the very essence of its power ought to have enlightened it: was it merely a registering device [...]? Or was it not, rather, the open sesame of a universe until then cloistered from view?[6]

The suitability of film for the representation of mental images is, for several writers, intrinsically bound up with the specific technological apparatus of the cinema. For Benayoun, 'unreal by nature', the only function of cinematic language 'should be to seek satisfaction in the unreal'.[7] Antonin Artaud writes, 'the cinema seems to me *to be made*, above all else, to express things of the mind, the inner life of consciousness'.[8]

We accept recollections, fantasies, dreams and hallucinations as part of the content and language of cinema, but questions such as precisely what constitutes representations of mental images, how we are able to identify a given sequence as a representation of mental images, and the various functions of mental images in film, have not hitherto been adequately explored by film theory. This study is the first systematic investigation of representations of mental images in cinema. The questions it confronts are: What is a mental image and how is it represented on the screen? What are the various types of mental image, and do these types have specific criteria for filmic representation? Which characters experience mental images? What do these characters have in common? What prompts them to form mental images?

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[6] Benayoun, R. (2000) 'Remarks on Cinematic Oneirism', in *The Shadow and its Shadow* (first published 1951), p.107

[7] *Ibid*., p.108

[8] Artaud, A. (2000) 'Sorcery and Cinema', in *The Shadow and its Shadow* (first published 1928), p.104, my emphasis

What do they imagine or remember? Why do they imagine or remember? What are the narrative situations which engender representations of mental images?

Aims

The primary aim of this project is to explore the functions of and to investigate the full import of representations of mental images in cinema. While viewing films for this thesis I was forcibly struck by the link between films in which there is a prevalence of representations of mental images and themes of madness. My fundamental aim in Part II is to demonstrate this connection. In order to do this I will need to consider what madness is, and to identify the different forms in which it manifests itself.

We will also need to define what a mental image is, and what constitutes a cinematic representation of a mental image. A major concern for us in Part I is to distinguish between those representations of the past which represent the mental images of memory and those which do not, or which only apparently do so. In order to explore fully the gamut of cinema's representations of mental images, we identify and distinguish between various types of mental image, and consider each on a systematic basis. We must also consider the ways in which cinema has represented mental images. To this end we will analyse formal aspects of their presentation, addressing such questions as: What are the grammatical principles according to which we can identify mental images? What alternatives to conventionally established codes have developed for the representation of mental images? We will draw on neofromalist narrative theory, philosophical theories of memory, phenomenological and cognitive

theories of mental imagery, and psychoanalytic dream theory in order to understand the form and content of filmic representations of mental images.

We commence each chapter by addressing questions of form, that is, the language with which cinema represents mental images. But our primary interest is in the image as a psychic phenomenon, the utility and value of images, and what images can tell us about the psychology of the characters who experience them. We will therefore identify the contexts and situations which engender mental images, and the different functions that each variety of mental image performs. Our study of the character types prone to experiencing acts of imagination will lead us to consider the relation between representations of mental images and themes of madness.

Terminology

We might reasonably ask: to whom should one attribute mental images in a film? To the director? To the scriptwriter? To the cameraman, who helps to realise the mental image? To the actor, who must assume the facial expression apposite to the emotion, situation, time, and place? The 'mental images' of which we speak are those of a character within the film. When we speak of 'representations of imagination and memory' we do not mean a depiction of a character as she is in the process of imagining or remembering. Representations of mental images are often bracketed by such shots of the subject remembering/imagining in the present, but as far as we are concerned the representation of *what* the subject imagines or remembers is a necessary element.

The most advanced theories of imagination come from phenomenology where the term ‘image’ means ‘mental image’ and encompasses all of memory and imagination. However, in writing about film we often use this term — image — to refer to the continuum of pictures projected upon the screen, and to distinguish the visual from the auditory elements. Thus we will speak of *mental images* wherever there is the possibility of confusion. Our definition of the mental image encompasses both image and sound. Sound is often synchronous with the visual aspect of the mental image, but may also constitute such an image in its own right.

We will use the terms ‘classical’ and ‘modern’ cinema to refer to the different eras of filmmaking which are essentially separated by the end of World War II (pre-1945 cinema is classical, post-1945 modern). But in using these terms, even in the most general way, we must remember that much contemporary cinema still adheres to classical principles, just as much pre-1945 cinema, particularly in Europe and Russia, can be described as modern. Since, in classical cinema, the distinctions between past and present are clear, I use the term *present* to refer to the temporal space which serves as the ground from which we can distinguish both the past and the various forms of imagination (dream, hallucination, etc.).

In Chapter 2 we will come to consider the different functions of recollection through the prism of film narrative theory. In *Narration in the Fiction Film*, David Bordwell uses the Russian formalist terms, *fabula* and *syuzhet*, to distinguish the chronological succession of narrative events from the order in which they are presented. These terms correspond to the more common terminology of *story* (fabula) and *plot*

(syuzhet). Through flashback the syuzhet presents fabula events out of sequence.[9] Generally speaking, memories which present fabula events which occur subsequent to the first syuzhet event (what Bordwell calls *internal* flashback), and those which, on the contrary, precede the first syuzhet event (*external* flashback), perform distinct functions.

In Chapter 2 we will also come to consider the *amplitude* of various recollections. '"Amplitude" is Genette's term for the duration of the event within the analepse [flashback]'.[10] Compare, for instance, the amplitude of Jedediah Leland's flashback in *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941) — which features the famous montage sequence in which nine years pass at the breakfast table — with that of the flash-inserts in *The Pawnbroker* (Sidney Lumet, 1965), in which the amplitude of the recollection coincides precisely with the time which elapses in the present.

Corpus

Representations of mental images in the cinematic and televisual media is such a vast topic that, in deciding on a corpus, we had to take some firm decisions about what to exclude. Therefore, we decided early on that we would focus on cinema and not on television, although there are many compelling representations of mental images in television.[11]

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[9] Bordwell, D. (1985) *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press., pp.78-80

[10] Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, London: Routledge, p.8

[11] There is one instance in Part II where I discuss a scene from the *Twin Peaks* television series, because it is relevant to the themes of the discussion.

The corpus of films discussed is determined by the relevance of each film to the themes of the topic. That is, in selecting films for analysis, the sole criterion was this: does the film contain representations of mental images? We discuss films wherever the answer to this question is affirmative. The corpus covers a broad range of cinema's history, from some silent films, through classical Hollywood films, Latin American cinema and European art cinema, up to present-day modern cinema. We have deliberately sought to engage with as wide a range of films — from different generic, national and historical contexts — as possible. We focus throughout on narrative cinema, because representations of mental images of people in documentary films are extremely unusual.[12] We develop our argument through the analyses of a great number of films. (Where the film was produced in another country, as far as possible, we have included the title in the language of origin.) We are not concerned to hierarchise or assert preference between eras of cinema, national cinemas, genres or specific directors. The disadvantages of this system are that some eras, genres and national cinemas are inevitably underrepresented, and there is no room for discussion of fascinating cases from television, such as Dennis Potter's *Pennies from Heaven* (1978), *The Singing Detective*, and *Lipstick on Your Collar* (1993).

Thesis structure

In this section we will preview the structure of the thesis — the organisation of chapters — as well as discussing some of the key literature and theories which we will draw on in each section. The thesis consists of two main parts: memory and

[12] There are sequences in documentaries which one could argue represent the mental images of memory. For instance, *The Thin Blue Line* (Errol Morris, 1988) contains reconstructions which animate the accounts of the various witnesses to the shooting of a police officer. These sequences could be taken for the witnesses' remembrance of what they saw, or the mental images of the narrators' imagination, inspired by the factitious version of events to which they attest.

imagination. In Part I there are two chapters — 1. Flashback and 2. Act of memory. The chapters in Part II comprise a taxonomy of the various forms of imagination (Chapters 3-7).

Chapter 1 focuses on flashback, assessing the relationship between this device and memory. In this chapter we establish important distinctions between various forms of flashback. In 1916, psychologist Hugo Münsterberg went some way towards introducing the fundamental distinction that we establish here, between those flashbacks which are prompted by acts of recollection and those prompted by acts of narration.[13] Since Münsterberg, however, few film theorists have shared this interest in the capacity of cinema to depict mental images. And so here, heedful of the historical developments in film practice since Münsterberg's writings, we revisit and develop his important distinction.

In its current usage, the term 'flashback' applies equally to all filmic representations of anteriority. No doubt this is convenient, but in speaking and writing about film, we must aspire toward greater specificity than this. From a phenomenological perspective, what is the ontological status of a given sequence? Does it represent the mental images of a remembering subject, or is it something else, an analogue of the mental images of memory or the realisation of a recounted narrative? The term 'flashback' is entrenched in the terminology and discourse about film, but in its current generally accepted usage, the term covers the gamut of filmic representations of the past. If 'flashback' is to remain *the* term that we use to designate anterior

[13] Münsterberg, H. (2002) 'The Photoplay: A Psychological Study', in Langdale, A. (ed.) *Hugo Munsterberg on Film*, London: Routledge (first published 1916), pp.92-93.

scenes, then we must surely begin to introduce some qualifying terminology that would increase specificity. Bordwell's distinction between *internal* and *external* flashbacks is a significant move in this direction. But more important than this, for us, is the ontological question.

In Chapter 2, we distinguish flashback from what we call *act of memory*, arguing that act of memory has more to do with the process of remembering, since it represents mental images. In positing this distinction, we aim to redress an inadequacy in current terminology. However, structuring the argument on the basis of this distinction has some notable implications. Firstly, it is not only film criticism which thus far has not recognised our proposed distinction, but — and this is what has undesirable implications for the presentation of our argument — the vast majority of filmmakers, too, are, have been, and will continue to be impervious to any such distinction. That is, many films mix or alternate freely between what we will call flashback-for-memory and act of memory, indifferent to the — for us significant — differences which we will identify between the two procedures.

Ideally, all references to a given film would be limited to the same passage of writing. But our identification of mental images is established on the basis of an ontological distinction, and if this distinction truly warrants the significance which we attribute to it, then it must form the template for the organisation of our argument. The thesis is thus structured on the basis of a phenomenological taxonomy, which means that discussion of some films — often the most interesting films, those that present a variety of forms of mental images — rather than being presented all together, will appear in fragments, spread across various chapters and sections. Nevertheless, where

this is the case, through our discussion of the functions of the various forms of mental images, we will re-establish thematic continuity. (In cases where it is impractical to fragment the discussion of a given film, we confine discussion of the film to as few separate sections as possible, while making clear any phenomenological distinctions between given sequences.)

While Part I discusses representations of the remembered past, Part II aims to cover the broader field of imagination (the imagined past, present and future). Part II is organised in terms of Sartre's 'pathology of imagination', with the theme of madness becoming more and more prominent in each successive chapter. Thus we commence Part II with a chapter exploring imagination in general (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 concentrates on imagined voices. In Chapters 5-7, we deal with the three broad classes of imagination imagery: fantasy (Chapter 5), dream (Chapter 6), and hallucination (Chapter 7). After an initial discussion of the basic form and function of representations of imagination in cinema, Part II assumes a taxonomical aspect, distinguishing between the major forms of imagination, the different scenarios or narrative situations which give rise to, and the various character types who experience, such imaginings. The specific organisation of Part II, rather than simply presenting an inventory of various states of imagination, is in fact, the necessary framework for the elaboration of our central argument in this section, namely, that many of cinema's representations of imagination are closely related to themes of madness.

It may be argued that all recollections are, in fact, acts of imagination, that whenever we remember, we are using our imagination, and that most of our 'memories' contain

more imaginary embellishments than we realise. This is a compelling argument, to which we shall return in Part II when we discuss Sartre's notion of 'quasi observation' (the specific mode of consciousness with which we confront the image). Nevertheless, for now I urge the reader to accept the broad distinction I posit, for purposes of expositional clarity, between memory and imagination.

Methodology

In Chapter 1 we draw on film narrative theory, since it is here that theorists have sought to distinguish between different varieties of flashback. Towards the end of Chapter 1, however, we introduce the question of the ontological status of filmic representations of anteriority. Overall, as the argument develops henceforth, our method is primarily phenomenological. We consider questions of form — the cinematic language in which representations of mental images are articulated and are recognisable or momentarily strategically disguised — and utility — the functions which representations of mental images perform. In Chapter 2 we introduce Alan Richardson's cognitive psychological theory of the image, as outlined in his *Mental Imagery* (1969), in an effort to understand possible reasons for the specific form of some representations of memory. Richardson remains an important point of reference in Part II.

We commence Chapter 3 with a brief review of Richardson's theory of mental imagery, before exploring Sartre's phenomenology of the image, as elaborated in his *L'Imaginaire*. Chapter 4 consists of an analysis of imagined voices in film. Here our approach is neoformalist and we have no recourse to any overarching theoretical perspectives, concentrating instead primarily on an analysis of the films. In Chapter

5, we draw on Sartre's phenomenology of daydreaming, and how this state is distinguished from normal waking consciousness and the dream state. In this chapter we also draw on Francine Stock's cognitive analysis of fantasy in film, from her article 'Fantasy, Imagination, and Film'.[14] In Chapter 6, Freud's psychoanalytic approach to dreams is an important point of reference, as is Sartre's phenomenology of dreaming. In Chapter 7, we draw on Sartre's theory of hallucination, as well as on Richardson's cognitive theory. Overall, however, our approach remains phenomenological — to the extent that we are concerned with mental images — and neoformalist, in that we are concerned with how these images are depicted in filmic language.

Our argument is formed around close textual analyses of the films themselves. In analysing a significant number of films, themes emerge, and our argument is structured around the identification, development and analysis of these themes. Because the argument is structured in this way, the reader will find that upon concluding a discussion of one film, we proceed to discuss another from a quite different era or generic context. In proceeding in this way the intention is not to disorient the reader, but to demonstrate that phenomenological trends in cinematic representations cut across, transcend conventional boundaries of era, genre and nationality.

[14] Stock, K. (2009) 'Fantasy, Imagination, and Film', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 49, No. 4, (October 2009), 357-369

Literature Review

I encountered problems in undertaking a search of relevant literature, to the extent that nobody has hitherto undertaken a comprehensive study of representations of mental images in cinema. In this section I will therefore identify the major texts and theories that I draw from throughout the thesis and explain how and why they are of relevance to my project.

The major point of reference in Chapter 1 is Maureen Turim's *Flashbacks in Film* (1989). Turim's book is the most comprehensive study of the flashback as a narrational device. This thesis is both broader and, in another sense, narrower than Turim's book in scope. Broader, in that we are not concerned solely with memory — in Part II we deal with the various forms of imagination. However, our scope in Part I is significantly narrower than Turim's in that, because we are concerned exclusively with representations of mental images, many of the films and flashbacks which Turim discusses are irrelevant for our purposes. In Part I, rather than considering the history of filmic representations of anteriority (which is essentially what Turim does), our concern is to identify the essential characteristics of those flashbacks which do not represent the mental images of memory. Having demonstrated why they do not, we can then dispense with them in order to focus on those representations of anteriority which do represent the mental images of memory. Turim considers questions as to the phenomenological status of flashbacks — whether or not they can be said to represent the mental images of memory — only in a cursory way. She makes no attempt to systematise, as we will, a method of distinction between those filmic representations of anteriority which represent the mental images of memory and those which do not.

Turim's book remains an important point of reference throughout Chapter 2, where we also examine and compare Henri Bergson's theory of memory as outlined in *Matière et Mémoire* (1912) and Marcel Proust's theory of memory, elaborated in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, considering what each of these theories can tell us about representations of memory in cinema. The style and approach of these two authors is clearly very different, but there are some important points of comparison between their respective theories of memory, which we will aim to bring out here. In Part II, we draw on Sartre's phenomenology of imagination as developed in his early theoretical works *Imagination: A Psychological Critique* (1936) and *L'Imaginaire*. In *Imagination: A Psychological Critique*, Sartre explores the history of theories of imagination, as elaborated by a variety of philosophers, and exposes the weaknesses of each theory, before finally advocating Husserl's theory, and sketching an outline of his own phenomeonological theory of imagination. This theory is comprehensively expanded in *L'Imaginaire*, which elaborates a 'pathology of imagination', from daydreaming, through hypnagogic images and the dream proper, to hallucination.

In Part II, we also examine cognitive theories of imagination, as outlined in Richardon's *Mental Imagery* (1969) and E.R Jaensch's *Eidetic Imagery and Typological* (1930), both of which examine the results of psychological tests of memory imagery, after-imagery, eidetic imagery, and imagination imagery. In Chapter 6 there are several references to Freud's *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*) (1900), which remains arguably the most significant attempt to understand this psychic phenomenon.

Much of the work on memory and imagination in film studies comes from the field of spectatorship.[15] To the extent that spectatorship studies deal with themes of memory and imagination they are, in a sense, thematically related to the concerns of this project. However, this work, fascinating as much of it is, is of limited relevance to our project, which is concerned not with the mental work of the spectator, but with that of the characters on screen.

We now commence our study of representations of mental images in cinema with a discussion of the form and use of flashback, examining its relation to the mental images of memory.

[15] See Rosenbaum, J. (1994) *Moving Places*, London: University of California Press; Burgin, V. (2004) *The Remembered Film*, London: Reaktion; Landsberg, A. (2004) *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press.

PART I - MEMORY

Chapter1. Flashback

Not all filmic representations of anteriority represent the mental images of memory. We must therefore establish a means of distinguishing the mental images of memory from other filmic representations of the past which do not represent the mental images of memory, or which only apparently do so. In this chapter we explore the relation between flashback and memory. The term 'flashback' currently covers the entire field of cinema's representations of anteriority. But what is the value of such a ductile term? Of fundamental importance for us is the ontological status of the images presented. Are they the mental images of a remembering subject, or are they autonomous acts of narration, their development essentially independent from the mental processes of the remembering subject? Having examined flashback we will be in a position to distinguish it from more properly subjective representations of the past.

We commence the chapter with a brief discussion of flashback in silent film, which draws significantly on Maureen Turim's research in this area. We then introduce a taxonomy of flashbacks, distinguishing most importantly between those flashbacks which are prompted by the recounting of a narrative and those which are prompted by recollection. We will then consider the various objects and situations which trigger those flashbacks which are prompted by acts of recollection. Next we examine aspects of presentation, such as the elements of filmic language which enable us to recognise flashbacks, and the ways in which flashback has been explored and redefined with the innovations of modern cinema. Then we discuss the various functions which flashback performs. Finally, we consider some key characteristics of

flashback, which distinguish it from more properly subjective filmic representations of anteriority, which will be the subject of Chapter 2.

Flashback in silent film

In *Flashbacks in Film* (1989) Turim notes the importance of the "vision" scene in early film. Prior to 1910, flashbacks 'are difficult to distinguish from vision scenes that are meant to be understood as imaginary, or actions that happen simultaneously, but are "seen" by a character in no position to observe them'.[16] Indeed,

> [t]he notion of a "vision" scene seems to have predominated over that of the flashback in films before 1910...The very notion of vision, of an imaginary seeing, may be closer to the spirit of much early cinema than the more concrete category of temporal inversion.[17]

In considering flashback in early film, Turim acknowledges that there is a dearth of extant material from this period, and so she has recourse to secondary sources. Early criticism of the flashback, such as that of Epes Winthrop Sargent, in his *Technique of the Photoplay* (1911),

> not only indicates a certain prominence of flashbacks prior to 1911 to which he is reacting, but also an attitude that, if not successful in suppressing the

[16] Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, London: Routledge, p.27

[17] *Ibid.*

> flashback, perhaps led to its more dynamic narrative coding and its differentiation from the vision scene.[18]

Citing early screenwriting manuals, such as Marguerite Bertsch's *How to Write for Moving Pictures* (1917) and Howard Dimick's *Modern Photoplay Writing* (1922), Turim further demonstrates that there was contemporary resistance to the flashback.[19] Psychologist and early film theorist Hugo Münsterberg embraced flashback as a technique for objectifying the subjective experience of memory, but with the caveat that flashback is ineffective wherever the film 'as not seldom happens, uses this pattern as a mere substitute for words'.[20]

When we consider Turim's review of the use of flashback in silent cinema, it seems Münsterberg had good reason to be wary of the trend for flashback to substitute for verbal dialogue. Flashbacks first developed in silent cinema as a means of bypassing 'cumbersome verbal titles'.[21] Given the verbal restriction of silent cinema, the flashback emerged as a 'visual means of compensation for the eloquent narrative alternatives offered by the word in the novel and verbal theatrical forms'.[22] In silent cinema, writes Turim, flashbacks frequently 'substitute images for dialogue or voice-over commentary [...] Titles, freed by an image flashback from the responsibility of narrating the entire story from the past,' could then be reserved for significant

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[18] *Ibid*., p.28

[19] *Ibid.*, p.29

[20] Münsterberg, H. (1916) *Hugo Münsterberg on Film. The Photoplay: A Psychological Study and Other Writings*, p.92

[21] Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, p.22

[22] *Ibid.*

dialogue, or as 'the equivalent of voice-over commentary'.[23] Thus the flashback which is substituted for the recounting of a story emerged in silent cinema as an economic means to convey narrative anteriority, freeing up written titles to perform a more dynamic role. In late silent cinema flashback is

> used increasingly as a semiotic substitution. As more and more American films of the twenties are adaptations [...] the flashback becomes a means of filmically presenting theatrical and novelistic modes of narration [...] the flashback serves as a kind of replacement for voiced explanations.[24]

Indeed, '[i]t is possible to see the use of the flashback in the late silent period as part of the compensation for the lack of sound and as an anticipation of the use of sound.'[25] The development of this use of flashback in silent cinema, Turim notes, 'has broad aesthetic consequences' which 'carry over to sound film'.[26] Though a past event can be narrated in sound much more easily than by written titles, where a past event is to be recounted in the sound film, 'the rich functions' of flashback narration will often remain 'an aesthetic choice'.[27] In the sound film flashback becomes 'a means [...] to avoid the static aspects of long verbal renderings […] The flashback as illustrator of dialogue is thus a technique that bridges the transition from silent to sound.'[28]

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[23] *Ibid.,* p.32

[24] *Ibid*., p.49

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] *Ibid*., p.32

[27] *Ibid*., p.33

[28] *Ibid*., p.49

Taxonomy of flashbacks

In classical cinema there soon developed a variety of forms of flashback. In this section we identify the major forms of flashback in narrative cinema.

Flashback-for-narrative (to listening subject)

As Turim's discussion has established, a great many flashbacks are prompted by one character recounting a story to another. In such cases, flashback replaces the verbal account of a past event by a character in the present. An alternative to simply watching and listening to the subject narrate the event, flashback offers a realisation of the recounted scenes. We will henceforth designate such episodes *flashback-for-narrative (to listening subject)*, since in such cases flashback substitutes the verbal narration of a past event to a listening subject (a character within the diegesis). [29] *Citizen Kane* is structured around a series of such flashbacks.

Flashback-for-narrative (to spectator)

Alternatively, the voice of the recounting subject may be internal. We will call those flashbacks which replace (or are the proper realisation of) a narrative that is recounted to and for the spectator, *flashback-for-narrative (to spectator)*. *Brief Encounter* (David Lean, 1945) consists of a series of such flashbacks. In her voiceover, Laura inwardly speaks to herself, and, at the same time, addresses her thoughts to the spectator. Like the 'narrational voice' in a novel, such voices implicitly acknowledge the fact of the fiction.

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[29] We find early examples of this device in silent films such as *Du skal aere din hustra* (*Master of the House*) (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1925).

Flashback-with-narrative

A subsidiary form of flashback-for-narrative is the (usually short) flashback, in which the voice of the recounting subject continues throughout the past scene. Here flashback is not so much substituted for narrative, as it appears *with* narrative (the voiceover of the recounting subject), as a supplement. Thus we will term these, *flashback-with-narrative*. *JFK* (Oliver Stone, 1991) is replete with flashback-with-narrative. The stories of witness after witness, speaker after speaker, are supplemented by images of the scenes described. And again, within this sub-group the previous distinction applies: flashback-with-narrative can, as in *JFK*, be addressed to a listening subject within the diegesis, or it may be addressed to the spectator.

Flashback-for-memory

Another genus of flashbacks is motivated by recollection. We will henceforth designate such episodes *flashback-for-memory*, since in such cases flashback is substituted for the memory of a past event. Some films, such as *Le jour se lève* (Marcel Carné, 1939), are structured around a series of such flashbacks. Very occasionally we find a sequence in which it is difficult to distinguish between flashback-for-narrative and flashback-for-memory.[30] While flashback-for-narrative is prompted by the recounting of a narrative, flashback-for-memory may be prompted by various means.

[30] In *For a Few Dollars More* (Sergio Leone, 1970), dialogue between Monco and Mortimer prompts a flashback. Mortimer tells Monco that he was once young like him but that something happened that made him appreciate life a lot more. Monco asks what happened, but then suggests that it might have been indiscreet to ask; Mortimer replies that it might be indiscreet to answer. We then enter a flashback in which we see Mortimer and his sister with their matching waist watches. Then El Indo suddenly bursts into the room and shoots Moritmer. The sequence lasts for several minutes, and upon returning to the present it is not entirely clear whether or not Mortimer has recounted the story to Monco. Does the flashback here replace Mortimer's verbal account in the present, or are we to understand that he silently remembers this?

I. Prompts

Flashback-for-memory is usually triggered by a material prompt. Some aspect of the present environment prompts a recollection. There is a connection, a resemblance, which, if one is mentally predisposed to remember, may even be quite remote, between the prompt in the present and some aspect of the remembered scene.

Each of the three flashbacks in *A Letter to Three Wives* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1949) is prompted by sound: the sound of the boat while the little girl reads; the enigmatic Addie Ross's haunting voice repeating the troubling questions: *Why didn't George go fishing … and why was he all dressed up?*[31] becomes technically modulated, morphing into the voice on a radio within Rita's flashback; the rhythm of water from a leaking pipe dripping into a bucket in the changing room of the present becomes that of a dripping pipe in Lora Mae's kitchen in her flashback. Some flashbacks are prompted by the performance of music. In *Casablanca*, Rick instructs Sam to play 'As Time Goes By', and the song prompts a flashback, which presents an exposition of Rick's romance with Ilsa in Paris prior to the German occupation.[32] Sometimes a line of dialogue prompts a flashback. In *8 ½* (Federico Fellini, 1963) the psychic duo, Maia and the magician, perform their magic on Guido, and Maia transcribes his thoughts onto a blackboard: 'asa nisi masa'. Guido confirms that she has read his mind correctly. But what does it mean? The nonsense phrase prompts Guido to recall a childhood scene.

[31] For reasons that will become clear later on, all excerpts of imagined voices are presented in italic font to distinguish them from actual utterances, or the remembrance of actual utterances.

[32] Here Rick's flashback resolves the narrative ellipse from earlier, when Ilsa had requested that Sam play 'As Time Goes By' and representation of her memory was deferred.

Returning to a particular place often prompts a flashback. In *Once Upon a Time in America* (Sergio Leone, 1984), Noodles visits his friend Fat Moe at the bar he owns and which, when they were children, was owned by Moe's father. Noodles looks through a hole in the wall of the toilet and we enter a flashback in which the young Noodles, through the same hole in the wall, voyeuristically observes Moe's sister practise her ballet dancing.

Sometimes a similarity between the present situation and some aspect of the past will prompt a flashback. The early part of *Il conformista* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970) features several flash-forwards to the moments immediately preceding the film's climactic action. In one of these sequences, Clerici argues with the driver, Manganielli, and orders him to stop the car, before getting out and walking ahead. Then, as Manganielli drives alongside Clerici, urging him to re-enter the car, we cut to flashback images of a schoolboy, the young Clerici, walking, a car following behind him. The intercutting between flashback and flash-forward establishes an association between the situations: when in the flash-forward Clerici acquiesces and re-enters the car, in the flashback the young Clerici steps into the road and signals for the car to stop. Eventually the present re-emerges, establishing the justification for the flashback: in preparation for his marriage Clerici has gone to confession. These flashback excerpts provide a context for the central episode of his confession: as an adolescent he was seduced by an effeminate homosexual chauffeur, whom he then murdered. The juxtaposition of flash-forward and flashback establishes an analogy between the two situations. The conduct of the young Clerici in the flashback becomes a metaphor for that of the adult Clerici, whose involvement with the Fascist Party is thus likened to a childish flirtation. The young Clerici is pursued by and flirts

with the chauffeur, but when it is time to submit himself to him, he shoots (and apparently kills) him. As an adult, Clerici is courted by and then joins and works for the Fascist Party, but renounces Fascist ideology and denies involvement as soon as Mussolini is defeated. When at the end of the film he convinces himself that a man whom he meets is the chauffeur he shot as a child, and accuses him of being a fascist, the metaphor becomes embodied. Clerici identifies signifier (chauffeur) with signified (fascism): 'Fascist!' The personal and the political are condensed: 'Paederast! Fascist!' Clerici rejects Fascism as he had rejected homosexuality. Just as a paederast corrupts innocent youths, so Fascism corrupted the Italian people. In the figure of the chauffeur of his childhood, Clerici equates Fascism with homosexuality and violently rejects both at once.

Having enumerated the various ways in which flashback is prompted, we will next consider some aspects of the form of flashback, both specific to the device itself and in terms of the device in relation to the film narrative as a whole.

II. Form

Flashback Frame

The 'present' sometimes functions as little more than a pretext which situates the main narrative in the past: a character recounts or remembers a past event and we enter a flashback, which continues sometimes for almost the duration of a film, before we return to the present. From the flashback we may return to the present for a time before entering a further flashback, thus effectively segmenting the narrative frame. This segmentation may be formalised, as in *Sergeant Rutledge* (John Ford, 1960), a courtroom drama in which the testimonies of each of the six witnesses prompts a flashback of comparable duration. With narration thus divided, the present functions as a relay-board, returning each time to a different past or to the same past but, recounted from a different character's perspective.

Ordinarily the processes by which flashback is conventionally motivated — recollection, recounting — serve to naturalise it within the fiction, but when the present becomes a relay-board, flashback 'can serve to self-consciously expose the mechanisms of filmic narration'.[33] The spectator then becomes 'suspended between two different ways of looking at temporal manipulations within film images, one that is aware of the formal operations of narrative and one that forgets these elements due to naturalising processes within the fiction'.[34] Near the end of *Le Doulos* (Jean-Pierre Melville, 1962), when Silien offers his grand exposition, explaining to Maurice precisely what he has been up to all along, we cut back and forth between the present of the café and the various past scenes recounted. In such cases, the past scenes are

[33] Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, p.16

[34] *Ibid.*, pp.16-17

usually presented in chronological sequence. When employed in this way, with so many flashbacks condensed into such a brief time, narration becomes particularly self-reflexive.

Flashback-within-flashback

Sometimes, within a flashback, another flashback occurs. We find the most striking instance of this phenomenon in *The Saragossa Manuscript* (Wojciech Has, 1965), which presents flashbacks-within-flashbacks in an intricately layered narrative.[35] Van Worden and several others listen to the stories of Señor Avadoro, who tells of his visiting Lopez Suarez, who is in bed with a broken leg (flashback). Lopez recounts to Avadoro the story (flashback-within-flashback) of how his father, the merchant Gaspar Suarez, sent him to Madrid, warning him never to associate with the banker, Moro. In Madrid, after meeting Don Roque Busqueros, Lopez visits Buen Retiro gardens where he meets Lady Inez, with whom he instantly falls in love. But Lopez despairs when he learns that Inez is the daughter of Moro, and, disconsolate, returns to Buen Retiro to weep over his misfortune. To cheer him up Busqueros tells him the story (flashback-within-flashback-within-flashback) of how one day he climbed a ladder outside a house and entered a woman's bedroom through the window. Having frightened her husband away, Busqueros climbs into bed with the beautiful Fransquita, who proceeds to recount to him her own story (flashback-within-flashback-within-flashback-within-flashback).

[35] Other films featuring flashback-within-flashback include *Heaven Can Wait* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1943), *The Locket* (John Brahm, 1946), *The Enforcer* (Bretaigne Windust, 1951), *The Barefoot Contessa* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1953), *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (John Ford, 1962), and *Edward Scissorhands* (Tim Burton, 1990).

Unprivileged narrators

Occasionally, since it often represents the story of a given character, flashback remains inconclusive, the events it imparts being confined to the (limited) knowledge of the recounting subject. In such cases the same event is sometimes presented from more than one perspective. In *The Barefoot Contessa* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1953), for instance, from Oscar's perspective, Bravano's upbraiding of Maria is inexplicable, and so it seems excessively malicious. However, when the incident is revisited in Torlato-Favrini's flashback, the reason for Bravano's outburst is elucidated.

Unreliable narration and the False

Whether prompted by an act of recollection or narration, or emerging autonomously, the events depicted in flashback generally possess an assumed integrity. That is, because of the authority which is the prerogative of flashback, unless explicitly directed otherwise, we generally grant the events it depicts the same credence which we grant events of the present. But sometimes, where a flashback animates the verbal account of a recounting subject, we find interesting inconsistencies or disparities between flashback content and the assumed/suggested account of the narrator. Sometimes flashback presents events which it seems unlikely that the recounting subject would disclose. In *Le fantôme de la liberté* (Luis Buñuel, 1974), the police commissioner (one of the two men who are, or claim to be, the police commissioner) meets, in a bar, a woman who bears an uncanny resemblance to his dead sister. He tells her: 'I remember a summer afternoon, it was unbearably hot ... ' and we enter a flashback,. in which the man enters a room where his sister is sitting naked playing the piano. They both behave as though the fact that she is naked is nothing out of the

ordinary. While she plays, he drops his matches, and as he retrieves them, we cut to a low-angled shot, presenting a view of the woman's lower half as she sits at the piano. In cases such as this we must consider to what extent flashback corresponds to the account which the recounting subject verbalises. Ordinarily, one would imagine that in recounting this story the narrator would omit such details, significant though they are. (In this case we might consider to what extent flashback content exceeds the account of the recounting subject.)

In other cases, there is no need to speculate as to what we imagine the verbal content of the recounting subject's account to be, since the narrating voice continues throughout the flashback, making explicit any disparities between flashback content and the account of the recounting subject. Thus, in *The Beguiled* (Don Siegal, 1971), when McBurney — insisting that he is a Quaker, on the battlefield only to help the wounded — tells the headmistress about how he came to be wounded, the flashback presents him shooting a Union soldier from his perch in a tree. He proceeds to explain that he was wounded in an attempt to save a rebel officer, while the flashback presents him shooting a man who goes to the aid of the person he had previously shot.

In *Stage Fright* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1950) Hitchcock makes exceptional use of flashback, exploiting its generally assumed integrity to lead us to understand that Johnny, like several previous Hitchcock protagonists, is an innocent man, implicated in a crime he did not commit. Subsequently, however, we discover that he was lying.[36] We will return to this question of the correlation between the assumed/implied account of the narrator and flashback content towards the end of this

[36] Other films in which there are false flashbacks include *Crossfire* (Edward Dmytryk, 1947), *The Usual Suspects* (Bryan Singer, 1995), and *Snake Eyes* (Brian De Palma, 1998).

chapter, when we come to consider the relation between flashback and the mental images of memory.

Focal inconsistency

In narrative theory, *focalisation* is the perspective from which an event is presented. In classical cinema, flashback content often exceeds the possible knowledge of the recounting or remembering subject, but some modern films exploit this tendency to the extent that it becomes conspicuous and self-reflexive. Consider the revelatory flashback in *Tirez sur le pianiste* (François Truffaut, 1962). Upon arriving in Léna's flat, Charlie freezes before a poster of concert pianist Edouard Saroyan. Léna says, 'Charlie's a café pianist, but it used to be different, didn't it, Edouard? ... ' The flashback is thus ostensibly narrated from Léna's perspective and, after Theresa's suicide in the flashback, Léna's voiceover recounts how Edouard became Charlie, a bar pianist. But the flashback content exceeds Léna's knowledge. The crucial information which it imparts — that Theresa was depressed because of her guilt over sleeping with Schemeel — Léna has no access to. Moreover, though the flashback is initiated by Léna, Charlie's internal monologue continues to reveal his thoughts within the flashback. Here, then, far from being surreptitiously concealed or ignored, illogical inconsistencies in focalisation are brazenly celebrated.

Flashback and dream

Occasionally we find that a sequence presented as a dream functions exactly like a flashback, that is, we grant credence to the events it presents in their relevance to the story outside of the dream. *Casualties of War* (Brian De Palma, 1989) opens with Erikson falling asleep while travelling on a bus. The image slowly dissolves to the

Vietnamese jungle, and the film's main narrative is thus presented as though it were a dream. But dream is here utilised as a narrative contrivance; the narrative is more usefully understood as unfolding within a flashback frame. The film tells the story of a picket of young U.S. soldiers who kidnap, rape, assault and then murder a Vietnamese peasant girl. Erikson is the only one who doesn't participate in the kidnap and he subsequently brings charges against his colleagues. At the end of the film, the men are convicted and face heavy prison sentences. As they exit the courtroom, the soundtrack presents Erikson's recollection of the commander's earlier caution: 'Even if these men do get convicted, they're not gonna do any real time.' In recalling these words, then, Erikson is revelling in ironic vindication (the commander was wrong — the men received stern sentences). But he also recalls the commander's subsequent comments. As the men file out of court, Meserve whispers something in Erikson's ear, but we don't hear what he says; rather, Erikson's recollection of the commander's warning continues: ' ... If I were them, I'd be looking for a little *payback!* Wouldn't you?' (The commander's caution is substituted for Merserve's whispered threat.) This jolts Erikson awake and we return to the present; the entire narrative has unfolded within a frame while Erikson has been asleep on the bus. The framing device situates the story in the past in order to demonstrate Erikson's lingering psychological trauma. But there is nothing in the narrative which resembles a dream until the moment Erikson awakens (it is conceivable that one could wake from a dream with the remembrance of such a nightmarish threat, which coincides with a jolt to the body as the bus stops). Here, then, the narrative frame lends an equivocal status to Erikson's recalled voice. Since everything that occurs within the frame is presented as the real (not the dreamed) past, we automatically accept the reality of the recalled voice (as the men file out of the courtroom, Erikson recalls his

commander's earlier caution). However, the moment of his waking lends a new quality to this voice, implying that it is part of a bad dream. Thus the contrivance of the dream-frame is not entirely redundant — it has metaphorical significance. When in the epilogue the girl says to Erikson, 'You had a bad dream, didn't you? It's over now, I think', her words have a broader significance: while the incident on the patrol *really did* happen, Erikson remembers it as though it were a bad dream, just as, one might argue, in the national memory of the U.S., the Vietnam War has become a bad dream.

Elsewhere, a matter of narrative convenience, the conflation of dream and flashback demonstrates an insufficient appreciation or recognition of the forms and functions peculiar to the dream. This is precisely the trouble with the dream sequences in *Solaris* (Stephen Soderbergh, 2002). The planet Solaris generates replica human beings from the memories of humans while they sleep. Chris's dream presents his memory of the first time he saw his dead wife Rheya, and their subsequent meeting at a party. Chris sits opposite an attractive young woman on a train. She smiles at him from the platform after alighting from the train. Later, at his friend Gibarian's party, Chris sees the woman again. They flirt, leave the party together and then make love. The extended sequence at the party in no way resembles a dream; this is flashback, and functions as flashback. Waking from this first dream to find Rheya resurrected, Chris soon disposes of her by sending her out into space. However, at night he dreams of her again and wakes to find her regenerated. Dream and flashback are confounded once more, the dream presenting a series of chronological episodes which resume the backstory previously established: Chris raises the issue of marriage; after some evasion, Rheya consents, etc. Flashback is typically prompted by an act of

recollection or the recounting of a narrative; sometimes, as we will see, in modern cinema it emerges autonomously. Here, though, Soderbergh announces a dream and presents a flashback. (This confusing of dream and flashback is confirmed when, subsequently, Rheya's artificial memories resume the backstory hitherto developed through Chris's dreams.)[37]

Many dreams contain elements which reference aspects of the dreamer's life, her obsessions, the people in her life, significant past events, apparently insignificant and banal recent impressions. Very occasionally, a dream may reproduce a significant memory, but representations of dreams which reproduce chronological histories, or present past events as they occurred, free of all the distorting tendencies of the censorship of the ego,[38] are prosaic, and demonstrate a failure to grasp or to respect the peculiarities of the dream and the complexities of the ways in which memory is manifested within it.[39]

Having discussed the major aspects of the form of flashback, we will now consider what changes modern cinema has brought about in flashback.

Flashback in modern cinema

Lonestar (John Sayles, 1996) is in many ways a conventional narrative film, but its specific presentation of flashback usefully demonstrates some aspects of the

[37] Other films which confound dream and flashback include *High Plains Drifter* (Clint Eastwood, 1973), *Once Upon a Time in America* (Sergio Leone, 1984), and *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1995).

[38] See Freud, S. (1997) *Die Traumdeutung*, trans. Brill, A.A., Hertfordshire: Wordsworth (first published 1900), p.53.

[39] *Ibid*., p.98: 'dreams very rarely reproduce memories in such a manner as to constitute, unchanged and unabridged, the sole manifest dream-content...' See also, pp.70-71.

innovative treatment of this device in modern cinema. Several times we pass into flashback with no discernible cut. For instance, when Holace tells Sam the story of how Sam's father Buddy Deeds forced the tyrant Sheriff Charlie Wade out of town. As Holace speaks the camera tilts down to frame a bowl of tortillas on the red tablecloth. Holace says, 'It started over a basket of tortillas ... ' The camera then draws back, and we are in the flashback.

At the conclusion of a flashback, we do not always return to the same present from which the flashback emerged. Having heard that Chucho Montoya witnessed Wade murder Eladio Cruz, Sam visits Chucho, over the border in Mexico. Chucho recounts his narrative, and we enter a flashback. Eladio's van has broken down on a bridge while he is crossing the border; he has several Mexican friends in the back of the vehicle. While urinating beneath the bridge, the young Chucho sees a vehicle approaching and remains hidden. It is Sheriff Wade. Aware that Eladio is helping Mexicans to cross the border illegally, Wade instructs him to surrender any firearms. As soon as Eladio lays his hands on his shotgun, Wade shoots him in the back. The flashback concludes with a shot of the young Chucho cowering beneath the bridge, petrified. A tilt up reveals Sam, now at the scene of the crime which Chucho described to him, looking out across the bridge immediately above where the young Chucho had hidden forty years earlier. The flashback emerges from one present and transports narration to another, temporally and geographically distinct.

Sometimes flashback is presented in such a way as to establish a reverse subjective causality. In *Jackie Brown* (Quentin Tarantino, 1997), as she leaves Ordell's, Jackie explains that she is due to meet Ray, the police detective, for lunch. We then see

Jackie and Ray talking at lunch, before cutting to a subsequent scene, a new present, in which Jackie describes to Max her conversation with Ray. Upon cutting from Jackie leaving Ordell, to her meal with Ray, we assume that this is a new present. However, when we subsequently cut to Jackie's conversation with Max, the lunch with Ray is revealed as having already happened (flashback). Edward Branigan calls such sequences 'retrospective flashbacks'.[40]

Transgression of temporal space

Sometimes in modern cinema the threshold separating past and present is crossed. In *Annie Hall* (Woody Allen, 1977) Alvy narrates a flashback of his childhood days. When the six-year-old Alvy is reprimanded by the teacher after kissing the girl sitting next to him, the adult Alvy appears within the flashback and interrogates the teacher — 'Why? I was just expressing a healthy sexual curiosity' — and the teacher and the girl whom he kissed both interact with him. As a putative past, the integrity of the flashback is ruptured by the presence of the adult Alvy, the scene becoming a self-reflexive interrogation of the form of flashback.

A subsequent flashback tells of Alvy's relationship with Allison. Their sex life is hindered by his obsession with conspiracy theories about the Kennedy assassination. Allison finally confronts him: 'You're using this conspiracy theory as an excuse to avoid sex with me.' Alvy now addresses the camera directly from within the flashback: 'Oh my God! She's right. Why did I turn off Allison Forchnick? She was beautiful ... ' Thus, unlike the school flashback which featured two Alvies (the six-year-old Alvy and the adult Alvy), here, where there is less of a gap between the time

[40] Branigan, E. (1992) *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, London: Routledge., p.235.

of the present and that of the flashback, the Alvy of the flashback suddenly becomes the Alvy of the present, employing the past tense in his direct address ('Why did I? [...] She was [...]'). In several subsequent scenes Alvy, Annie and other characters from the present appear within flashbacks. In each case the temporal and existential thresholds which conventionally distinguish the present from flashback are magically transgressed.

Objective flashback

In outlining why, as a device, flashback is inadequate for a 'cinema of time', Deleuze explains, 'even when an author proceeds by flashback, he subordinates the flashback to another process which gives it foundation'.[41] That is, conventionally, flashbacks are logically and subjectively motivated, either by an act of narration or recollection. But in modern cinema, we find flashbacks which emerge autonomously, 'objective' flashbacks.[42] While in classical cinema, flashback-for-memory is typically prompted by a dissolve, in keeping with psychological theories of memory, such as that of Münsterberg, which states 'that memory operates through association of images', the objective flashback, not psychologically motivated, is typically effected by a simple cut.[43]

In *This Sporting Life* (Lindsay Anderson, 1963) we pass back and forth between the present, in which Frank visits the dentist after having his teeth knocked out at rugby, and two ongoing pasts, the transitions often emerging autonomously. When Frank

[41] Deleuze, G. (1988) *Cinéma 2: L'image-temps*, trans. Tomlinson, H. & R. Galeta, London: Continuum, p.52

[42] See Branigan, E. (1992) *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, London: Routledge, p.173

[43] Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, p.31

arrives at the Weavers' Christmas party and installs himself in a bedroom, a flashback emerges, presenting him and his landlady Margaret and her children enjoying a day at the park. From here, rather than return to Frank in the present, a second past emerges in which Frank plays rugby and then goes to the pub and sings. Here, then, we pass directly from one past to another. While the first flashback seems to be precipitated by Frank's remembrance, the second emerges autonomously (we cut from Frank walking away from the lake with the son, to him out on the rugby pitch, in a different past).

Medium Cool (Haskell Wexler, 1969) contains an objective flashback which is interesting in that, though it emerges autonomously, it is nevertheless situated such that, in its relation to the footage of the present which immediately precedes and follows it, it contributes to the articulation of an unmistakable social comment. John has taken Ruth and her son Harold, who is a pigeon enthusiast, to a site at which there are hundreds of pigeons penned in traps. John and Ruth talk, while Harold keenly observes the pigeons. A flashback emerges in which Harold's father, who is now serving in Vietnam, takes him for a walk and talks to him about women. He must never forget that a man is the ruler of his house. He must dominate his wife. A wife belongs to a husband, but a husband does not belong to his wife. As we return to the present, the pigeons are released from their traps and fly through the air in formation. Harold looks on in amazement. This shot of the birds flying free represents a figurative repudiation of the father's advice to his son in the flashback. The free flying birds signify the movement for women's emancipation from the oppressive patriarchal ideology which the father's speech exemplifies. Indeed, the developing relationship between Ruth and John, in the absence of the husband, is evidence of this

liberation. But the flashback is in no way subjective. Harold does not remember the conversation with his father, and then, upon seeing the birds released, realise that his father is wrong. Rather, the juxtaposition of the flashback, with the freeing of the pigeons in the present, creates a political significance that is for the spectator alone.

Yawar Mallku (Jorge Sanjinés, 1969) is structured around a series of objective flashbacks, though here this series is triggered by an original act of narration. Ignacio is shot by the police. In the city, his brother Sixto and his wife Paulina take him to a hospital. Ignacio needs blood, and neither Sixto's nor Paulina's blood is compatible, so they must raise the necessary money to buy the blood. Sixto asks Paulina what happened, and she explains how she and Ignacio had three children and were very happy. As she continues — 'Then the epidemic came and all three died.' — we enter a flashback. Thus the flashback is substituted for Paulina's verbal account. Henceforth, the narrative unfolds in a series of flashbacks, returning to the present at regular intervals. Such a structure is common in classical cinema. The difference here is that action does not remain in stasis in the present. Instead, there is a radical urgency: Ignacio is dying; Sixto must find money to buy blood. Thus when the first flashback concludes, Paulina is no longer recounting her narrative to Sixto; we cut to a new present, in which Sixto visits a friend and asks to borrow money, while Paulina waits at the hospital. In the next flashback, after visiting the site where the children who died in the epidemic are buried, Ignacio and the villagers visit a neighbouring village and question the local people about the women's fertility and what contact they have had with the fertility clinic. For the remainder of the film, we pass back and forth between the two ongoing narratives: in the present, Sixto tries to raise money for Ignacio's operation; in the past, the villagers come to realise that the

Americans' 'fertility' clinic is systematically rendering the local women sterile. While to some extent the original act of narration justifies and rationalises the subsequent flashbacks, these nevertheless emerge autonomously.

In omitting the explicit signposting and motivation to which we are accustomed, *This Sporting Life* and *Blood of the Condor* demonstrate a treatment of flashback quite distinct from that in classical cinema. Nevertheless, the objective flashback has since disseminated into more popular cinema and we find it in such contemporary films as *Reservoir Dogs* (Quentin Tarantino, 1992), *The Funeral* (Abel Ferrara, 1996) and *Felicia's Journey* (Atom Egoyan, 1999).

Let us now consider the various functions which flashback performs.

III. Function

Narrative economy

Flashback is frequently used as a means of narrative economy. Years and decades may be condensed within a flashback. At the start of *Moulin Rouge* (John Houston, 1952), a flashback distils key episodes of Toulouse Lautrec's past. He was born into a wealthy aristocratic family. One day he fell down the stairs, breaking both of his legs. His legs remained the same length, while his upper-body grew. Because of his disability he is unappealing to women. He moves to Paris. Thus we learn the history of Lautrec before the proper narrative commences.

In modern cinema, the effect of flashback is often quite the opposite of narrative economy. In *The Wild Bunch* (Sam Peckinpah, 1969) we enter a flashback as Pike recounts to his friend the story of how he came to be physically scarred. His mistress's husband came home and, catching Pike with his wife, opened fire, killing her and wounding him. Pike explains, 'there isn't a day or an hour that passes' that he doesn't think of revenging himself on this man. Since this narrative strand remains unresolved (Pike doesn't catch up with this man), one might question the purpose of the flashback. Unlike Lautrec's tragic accident in *Moulin Rouge* — knowledge of which is important for the proper functioning of the plot — the story behind Pike's scar is narratively irrelevant: Pike longs for the opportunity to avenge himself, but, as it turns out, such an opportunity does not arise. Rather than advancing the narrative, the primary function of flashback here is to contribute to the psychological realism with which Peckinpah invests his characters, an aspect traditionally lacking in the Western. Narratively superfluous, flashback here establishes a minor nuance in

Pike's character which supplements character traits that have already been established — he is resolute, wilful, determined.

Clear narrative motivation

Sometimes the narrative situation essentially dictates the emergence of a flashback. Films with an investigative structure often contain flashbacks, and witness's testimonies in courtroom scenes frequently motivate flashbacks. Such narrative situations virtually demand the emergence of flashback. In general, wherever a character is required to recount a significant past event, it is likely a flashback will emerge. Rather than remain in the present for the duration of the story, we enter the recounted scene, which represents a more animated and narratively engaging version of the past.

But, as we have seen, many flashbacks are motivated by recollection. And, again, some scenarios demand the emergence of flashback-for-memory. In *Kill Bill, Vol. 2* (Quentin Tarantino, 2004), the Bride confronts Bud, one of the men who participated in the massacre at her wedding rehearsal. However, he has anticipated her arrival and is prepared; he buries her alive in a wooden coffin, nailed shut. Here we enter a flashback entitled 'The Cruel Tutelage of Pai Mei', in which the Bride becomes a pupil of Pai Mei, who finally teaches her his secret 'Five Point Palm Exploding Heart Technique'. In the present, after freeing her hands and feet from their binding, the Bride calmly begins punching through the coffin using Pai Mei's secret technique, and ultimately escapes. Buried alive, it seems the Bride's adventure is over. But her crusade cannot end in this way. She will inevitably overcome her predicament. But

how? Flashback emerges here as *deus ex machina*, rescuing the film from a narrative impasse.

Revelation

The most common function of flashback is as revelation. Since early film, flashbacks have performed this function.[44] Such revelatory flashbacks usually occur towards the end of a film. Some revelatory flashbacks are explicitly or implicitly influenced by psychoanalytic theory. Throughout *Marnie* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1964) Hitchcock scatters indications that Marnie has a psychological condition which might explain the fact that she is a compulsive thief: she has a pathological dread of the colour red (whenever she is confronted with the colour — the gladiolas, the jockey's spotted top at the racecourse, the red ink spilt on her white blouse — the screen is momentarily immersed in red and she becomes faint); she is likewise petrified, utterly immobilised by thunderstorms; she is haunted by a recurrent nightmare (there is a tapping noise; her mother comes to wake her, but Marnie doesn't want to get out of bed; then the cold starts); finally, on her honeymoon with Rutland we discover that she appears to be irremediably sexually frigid. In the final scene Rutland violently urges Marnie's mother Bernice to recount the fateful events of the night of her 'accident', in the hope that this will prompt Marnie to confront her repressed memories of the traumatic night, and thereby overcome her complex. He reveals to Bernice that he has read the archived publicity about her murder trial, and knows that she used to work as a prostitute. Outraged, Bernice resists Rutland's effort to compel her to remember, implores him to leave, and finally raises her fists to assault him. It is this inadvertent re-enactment of elements of the forgotten night — the thunder and lightning storm,

[44] See Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, p.36

Bernice ordering a man to leave her house, the ensuing physical struggle — which triggers Marnie's memory:

> 'You let my Mama go! You're hurting my Mama!'
>
> 'Who am I, Marnie?'

Rutland elicits from her that he is a sailor. He taps three times on the wall, and Marnie — now embodying the child that she was — explains that this means that her mother has a visitor and she will have to get out of bed. The ensuing flashback reveals that in his struggle with Bernice, the sailor fell on her and badly injured her leg. It was, in fact, Marnie who killed the sailor with the fire poker, in an effort to defend her mother. The traumatising sight of the man's blood — a reminder of her violent action — is the root of her pathological fear of the colour red. The flashback functions as revelation in a psychoanalytic sense, enabling Marnie to confront her psychological trauma and thereby overcome her repressions.

While most revelatory flashbacks are external, that is, they present story events which occurred prior to the first plotted event, some revelatory flashbacks are internal, representing an episode which previously was partially or completely elided. In *Sex, Lies and Videotape* (Stephen Soderbergh, 1989), Graham's project of filming his conversations with women talking about their sex lives functions for him as an alternative to an actual sexual relationship. He tells Ann, 'I'm unable to get an erection in the presence of another person', and a subsequent scene suggests that he masturbates while viewing the tapes. At the same time, the interview format, which to some extent imitates the scenario of therapy between psychiatrist and patient — Graham encourages the women to share with him their most intimate secrets — performs a therapeutic function for the interviewees. In the film's climactic scene of

Graham's conversation with Ann, however, the roles are reversed; she assumes the role of interviewer. Interestingly, this crucial scene is presented in a flashback. John watches the videotape of the interview, and we enter a flashback. The conversation performs a therapeutic function for both interlocutors. Ann helps Graham to accept that his project is destructive, since it negatively affects the interviewees and their families. His interview with her sister Cynthia — in which Cynthia disclosed the fact of her affair with John — has affected her own life adversely. At the same time, Graham becomes a conduit through which Ann vents her frustration and anger. The realisation that his hobby has so profoundly affected Ann has a reciprocal effect on Graham. They console one another and as they are about to make love, he turns off the camera. The revelation of the flashback — the conversation which the flashback presents — has several aspects. Firstly, viewing the tape functions as a revelation for John. When John learns from Ann that she made a recording with Graham, he jokes, 'Well I know you didn't fuck him!' (Ann is portrayed as frigid and prudish about sex.) However, at the conclusion of their interview it is clear that Graham does make love with Ann. On a more profound level, the conversation itself functions as a revelation for Graham, in two important but interrelated aspects. He previously confided to Ann that he was impotent. During her tirade, Ann identifies his hobby as his problem, and finally convinces him of this. In turning off the camera before he and Ann make love, Graham conquers both of his problems — his hobby and his impotence — at once; and it is clear that what Graham understood to be two distinct and separate aspects of his life, are in fact fundamentally interrelated. His hobby had developed as consolation for the absence of an actual sexual relationship. Ann helps him to understand that, far from being a consequence, his hobby had become the cause of his impotence.

The revelatory flashback-for-memory often elucidates some past event which will establish psychological motivation for habitual behaviour, as in *Marnie*, or illuminates previously obscure aspects of the plot. Sometimes, however, in modern cinema this anticipated revelatory function of the flashback remains unfulfilled. The flashback elucidates little, and the obscurity of the motivations and habitual behaviour of the remembering subject can even be compounded by flashback. In *Belle de Jour* (Luis Buñuel, 1967) various episodes in the early part of the film establish that Séverine is becoming increasingly intrigued by the idea of prostitution and the brothel. After dropping a vase of flowers and then a bottle of perfume, she says to herself, 'What's wrong with me today?' A flashback emerges in which, as a young girl, she is held closely and kissed by a middle-aged man while her mother calls her from offscreen. The presence of the flashback seems to imply that this incident may account for Séverine's specific libidinal development (she is frigid with her husband, while secretly harbouring masochistic sexual fantasies and a fascination with the taboo of life as a prostitute). But the suggestion that she may have been sexually abused does not constitute an adequate psychological explanation for Séverine's masochism. Turim asks, 'Why do these events flash through her memory at these particular junctures in the present?'[45] In contrast to the psychological causality which is often established in the classical flashback, these flashbacks involve 'an adamant decision to avoid offering explanations all the while that they remain close to a psychological process and evoke possible causal and associative relationships through their placement in the film's structure.'[46] In modern cinema, then, rather than illuminating

[45] Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, p.228

[46] *Ibid*.

aspects of a character or narrative, flashback can instead compound existing ambiguities and obscurities.

In contrast to those revelatory flashbacks which occur towards the end of a narrative, elucidating some strategically established obscurity, near the beginning of *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (Terence Davies, 1988), Terence Davies uses flashback as an element of contrast, colouring an uneasy but tranquil image of the present with the subjective remembrance of past scenes.[47] On the day of one daughter's wedding, the family members are assembled before the camera in a static shot which seems to be justified as a prolonged pose for a wedding photograph. From this tableau, the brother and sister's flashbacks recall past scenes of the father's violence, cruelty and stubbornness. A contradiction is thus established, revealing a dark aspect of the family's past. The bride would have liked her dead father to have lived to see her wedding day; the sister is glad he is dead and recalls his brutal cruelty and violence; the son's flashback reveals a bitter rivalry. All this problematises the tableau of the present. The juxtaposition of the rather forced happiness of the posing family members and the brutality of the memories produces an effect of dissonance. Meaning is created 'not from forward impetus but from stark contrast or conflict'.[48]

Soderbergh's *Solaris* presents the memories of a regenerated surrogate of a dead woman. As we have seen, Chris wakes to find that his dead wife Rheya has been resurrected. But Rheya gradually learns that she is not a real person. She recalls past

[47] See Davies's interview with Wendy Everett in her *Terence Davies*. He welcomes interpretations which draw musical analogies from his films (p.204; p.216). And note their discussion of contrast and cinematic texturing (pp.211-13).

[48] Everett, W. (2004) *Terence Davies*, p.72

scenes, her memory continuing the backstory previously established in Chris's dreams, which charts the development of their relationship. She discovers that she is pregnant; Chris becomes impatient with her secrecy; they argue at a dinner party. In the present, confused and slightly agitated, Rheya tells Chris, 'I'm not the person I remember ... I do remember things, but ... I don't remember being there. I don't remember experiencing those things.' Chris brings her some pills to calm her. This prompts her to recall trying to open a bottle of pills. Rheya then recalls the decisive argument which followed Chris's discovery that she had been pregnant but aborted their child; devastated, Chris leaves her. She hysterically begs him to stay, and subsequently commits suicide, taking an overdose of pills. Rheya's discovery that she is not human accounts for her sense of incompleteness and dissatisfaction. Though they evidently do not diminish her increasing sense of alienation, her memories do help Rheya to establish some sense of identity. However, by presenting her memories as a continuation of the backstory established in Chris's dreams, Soderbergh fails to grasp the nature of the experience and process of memory. Rheya is comparable to someone suffering from amnesia who gradually recovers her memory. But the notion that in such a case the past experiences of the recovering amnesiac would be reconstituted, little by little, in precisely the sequence they occurred, is problematic. On the contrary, this person's memories would surely be reconstituted in a more desultory fashion; one memory might prompt a memory of an earlier incident, for instance. Here, however, through the combination of Chris's dreams and Rheya's memories, *Solaris* presents a series of past scenes, which are all fortuitously arranged in a linear chronological progression, so that together they chart a narrative which runs parallel to that in the present. It is quite possible for a film to present two temporally distinct ongoing narratives effectively. Compare, for instance, *This*

Sporting Life, which presents a bifuricated form with temporally distinct developing narratives, the passage between temporal zones effected largely by objective flashbacks. By contrast, here the attempt to establish logical motivation for the passage from present to past results in degraded representations of dreams and memory.

Guilty conscience

In *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence* (Nagisa Oshima, 1982), two prisoners of war incarcerated in adjacent cells communicate through the wall. As Jack explains that he is plagued with guilt over his betrayal of his younger brother, we enter a flashback which shows how he allowed his brother to suffer the ordeal of the school's initiation rites. The other boys stripped him, forced him to sing and laughed at his singing; he never sang again.

Nostalgia

Flashbacks sometimes perform a nostalgic function. Examples include the scenes in *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*) (Tomás Gutiérrez, 1968), when Sergio returns to the huge house of his childhood friend, and when he later recalls his first sexual experiences at a brothel. Also, near the beginning of *Cries and Whispers* (Ingmar Bergman, 1972), when Agnes recounts her memories of her mother in internal monologue. In both cases, the nostalgic flashback is prompted by an act of narration and shares an identical form: the sense of nostalgia is established by the content of the voiceover and supplemented formally by the presence of wistful nondiegetic music and an absence of diegetic sound.

But the nostalgic flashback can also be prompted by a recollection. There is an interesting sequence in *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998), which offers a self-reflexive comment on this function of flashback in cinema and television. When Truman first begins to suspect that his life is not what he imagined it was, he produces from his trunk a cardigan which prompts a memory. One of the two waitresses who are watching the show on television explains, 'They got rid of her, but they couldn't erase the memory.' From Truman clutching the cardigan in his lap there is a hackneyed dissolve to a flashback which presents the story of his thwarted college romance with Lauren (in fact Sylvia), who, morally opposed to the exploitative concept of the show, is determined to reveal to Truman that his life is not real. An attractive young lady catches Truman's attention, but at the moment they make eye-contact, Truman's future wife Meryl deliberately trips over him, and when he looks up, the girl has gone. At the college dance, as Truman dances with Meryl, the mysterious girl appears again and is promptly bundled away by men in suits. They finally meet in the library, and Lauren anxiously urges him to leave with her. After a temporal ellipse they arrive that evening at the beach. A car approaches and Lauren realises that the show's organisers have come to intervene. She frantically tries to tell Truman everything — his life is a television show, her name is not Lauren, but Sylvia — but she is agitated and incoherent; Truman is confused and is unable to understand. Her 'father' appears and takes her away, explaining that she is insane. Truman sees that she has left her red cardigan behind and calls after her. This sequence self-consciously acknowledges cinematic and televisual conventions for signifying memory. Truman's entire life is televised, but the show cannot faithfully render his mental images. Rather than broadcasting Truman sitting alone, clutching the cardigan

in his lap, the show's creators, aware that for him the cardigan signifies Sylvia, present archive scenes of their thwarted romance.

Therapy

Track 29 (Nicolas Roeg, 1988) presents the story of American housewife Linda, who is suffering from suppressed guilt, because twenty years earlier she was forced to give up her baby for adoption, after a teenage pregnancy. In two significant flashback sequences Linda recalls her sexual encounter, with the fairground bumper-car man, in which she conceived. In the first, she sits alone in a bar, but imagines she is with her long-lost son, Martin, who, a man-sized infant, urges her to tell him a story. Sitting with her legs open and eyes half-closed, it is clear that for Linda, recounting the episode is a sensual experience. We cut back and forth between Linda recounting the story to Martin in the bar, and the flashback at the fairground. At several points, it seems Linda is struggling to continue, that the memory is too painful, but Martin desperately urges her on and Linda's narration becomes increasingly intense, so that by the time she and the bumper-car man reach a climax in the flashback, so she and Martin reach an analogous climax in the bar — Linda in her increasingly intense recounting of the scene, and Martin in his exuberant encouragement. It seems that Linda has repressed all memory of this event for twenty years, but now, in an alcohol-fuelled mid-life crisis, at the behest of (the irreal) Martin, she forces herself to relive the event. Subsequently, she recalls the incident again when she tells the story to her (actual) friend Arlene. The process of working through the past here performs a cathartic function.

A note on the elision of flashback

Flashback is such a convention of classical Hollywood cinema, the signs which signify its emergence so familiar, that often it is refreshing when in a situation where it seems possible or likely, flashback is elided. In *The Set-up* (Robert Wise, 1949), veteran boxer, Stoker, relaxes in the dressing-room, preparing for his fight. One fighter returns from the ring victorious and exhilarated, giving a graphic account of how he defeated his opponent. A young boxer, nervous immediately before his first fight, is disturbed by this talk, and rushes to the bathroom. When he emerges, one of the changing-room attendants reassures him:

> 'Don't worry kid — it happens to everybody first time. Don't it Stoker?'
>
> 'Sure, sure,' Stoker replies. 'I've done it myself ... '

The camera moves in on Stoker as, momentarily lost in a reverie, he mutters to himself, no one else any longer paying attention: 'Nineteen hundred and twenty-eight, Trenton. Yeah, Trenton, New Jersey. That was twenty years ago ... ' Here, the institution of flashback-for-memory looms large. While this seems a most unpropitious moment for the narrative to veer off into an anterior tangent, many of the tell-tale signs are nevertheless present: the camera movement in, framing the subject in close-up; Stoker is momentarily withdrawn, detached from his immediate surroundings, lost in nostalgic reverie. The convention, the cliché rears its head, brushes up against the diegetic present, threatening, as Stoker stares off screen twenty years into the past. Then off-screen sound from the changing-room intrudes, we cut to a longer shot and Stoker collects himself, resuming the interrupted task of untying his shoelace. The moment lasts only a few seconds, but, for the spectator, the effect is infinitely more satisfactory than if the scriptwriter had submitted to convention by presenting a flashback. Instead, what we have is an image of a man remembering: a

35-year-old veteran boxer, recalling his fledgling days as a fighter. Perhaps the spectator will momentarily imagine the young Stoker preparing for his first fight. The omniscient narrator, who frequently grants access to a character's subjectivity is absent here; the particulars of Stoker's memory remain obscure, opaque, just as in life we do not possess magical access to the memories of others. It may be that the filmmaker here simply wanted to show a man remembering, and had no intention of invoking the possibility of a flashback. Perhaps, then, the flashback is so conventional that such an image of a man remembering is inevitably interpreted in its shadow. That is, this scene gives me pleasure, not only by virtue of what it is in itself (an image of a man remembering), but in opposition to what it seems by convention to withhold (flashback).

Having examined formal and functional elements of flashback, we will now pose a significant question: What is the relationship between flashback and the mental images of memory? In tackling this question we will consider the two distinguishing features of flashback, the characteristics above all others by which it is distinguished from properly subjective representations of the past: its emphasis on narration, and its relation to time.

IV. FLASHBACK, NARRATION AND TIME

Flashback and narration

Often the function of flashback is purely expository. Consider, for instance, the flashback in *Out of the Past* (Jacques Tourneur, 1947). The narrative which Jeff recounts to Meta is presented in a flashback. But what is the precise status of the scenes presented? These episodes are, I think, best understood as autonomous narrational offerings. 'This happened', the flashback tells us. The emphasis here is on *narrating rather than remembering*. Jeff recounts his story to Meta and the flashback presents the scenes he recounts; it is neither necessary to attribute these images to Jeff's memory nor to Meta's imagination: the images are autonomous; they are offered by an authorial hand for the benefit of the spectator.

Flashback and time

The other key aspect by which flashback is distinguished from properly subjective representations of the past is its relation to time. The relation of the duration of flashback to the intervening time which seems to elapse in the present is often incongruous.[49] Frequently the duration of flashback is greater than the length of time that seems to elapse in the present. This is to say that flashback has the capacity to insert its duration within (what is in effect) a fissure of the present. Flashback is able, for its duration, to exist autonomously, independent from the temporality of the present. In considering the relation between flashback duration and time elapsed in the present, we must return to our distinction between the two major varieties of flashback.

[49] 'Flashback duration' is the duration of the flashback itself, and is distinct from flashback *amplitude*, which is the amount of story time presented within the flashback. See Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, p.8

Flashback-for-narrative

In flashback-for-narrative there is usually a coincidence between flashback duration and time elapsed in the present. The duration of screen-time which the flashback consumes is equivalent to the time which we imagine it would take for the recounting subject to articulate her story in the present. But in considering the relationship between flashback-for-narrative and the mental images of memory we must remember that such flashbacks may exceed or contradict the (implied/assumed) version of events which the recounting subject chooses to verbalise. Branigan distinguishes between objective and subjective flashbacks, but argues that whether a flashback emerges autonomously or is subjectively motivated will not necessarily determine its content, since 'what we see in a subjective flashback is often stubbornly independent of the character's recollection'.[50] That is to say, flashback often presents more than the recounting subject knows and/or tells. We have established that there is sometimes — as in *The Beguiled* — a glaring disparity between the veracity of flashback and the factitious verbal accounts of some recounting subjects. While many flashbacks present a realisation of the events a recounting subject narrates, at the same time flashback retains a *de jure* autonomy, which means that it often exceeds the limits of the knowledge of the recounting subject (*Tirez sur le pianiste*) and/or the information which we imagine he or she would choose to verbalise (*Le fantôme de la liberté*).[51] Flashback-for-narrative is neither reducible to the memory of the recounting subject, nor to the imagination of the listening subject. It is presented by an authorial hand for the benefit of the spectator. And it is precisely because of its

[50] *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, p.173.

[51] For more on the subtle differences between the flashback itself and the account which we imagine the recounting subject gives see Turim's discussion of *Citizen Kane* in *Flashbacks in Film*, pp.114-16.

sustained correlation with the present — because here flashback is substituted for a verbal account which occurs simultaneously in the present — that there is this approximate coincidence between flashback duration and time elapsed in the present.

But if, in flashback-for-narrative, flashback is substituted for the narration of a past event, what relation has it, if any, to the mental images of memory? Consider the sequence at the end of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (John Ford, 1962), in which we see Tom kill Valance. This sequence in fact replaces a verbal account of a past event. This is not Ransom's *memory* of the event, since until this point he believed that it was *he* who shot Valance. We might attribute the sequence to Tom's memory, since it is he who knows what happened and is explaining it. However, since Tom *knows* what happened, why should he now remember it? Though we do not hear what he says, it is here that Tom explains to Ransom that it was he (Tom) who killed Valance. The flashback is substituted for Tom's account of the event in the present. When recounting a story is it necessary to form mental images? Surely in this case Tom simply gives expression to a scene with which he is so familiar that no *actual* recollection is necessary.

It seems that the narration of a past event somehow precludes the intense form of remembering which we would identify as mental images. Thus, I propose the following provisional hypothesis: an event cannot be narrated *and* remembered simultaneously. Where an event is narrated, the relationship between the recounting subject's consciousness and the past is equivocal, but it seems that a narrating

consciousness is incompatible with the pure form of remembering which constitutes mental images.[52]

Flashback-for-memory

In flashback-for-memory there is a manifest disparity between flashback duration and time elapsed in the present. Branigan writes, 'when a character remembers the past, we may only be seeing the past as it might have been represented earlier in the story when the character was then living it as the "present". '[53] This may have something to do with the relationship between amplitude — the duration of the event within the flashback — and duration. In flashback-for-memory, amplitude is usually significantly greater than duration: the events depicted in the flashback are condensed into a certain (lesser) quantity of screen time. To demonstrate the disparity between flashback duration and time elapsed in the present, we will consider an instance of flashback-for-memory in *Raising Cane* (Brian De Palma, 1992). As Carter smothers his wife Jenny with a pillow, we enter a flashback in which Carter recalls sitting in the car park of the playground, watching Jenny walk into the woods with her ex-lover Jack. Whilst a lot happens in this flashback — the young mother with the child asks him for a lift home; Carter follows Jenny and Jack into the woods; Carter's maniacal personified alter-ego Cane appears and urges Carter to 'go home' while he kidnaps the young mother's baby; Cane steals Jack's coat, murders the young mother, hides her body in the boot of Jack's car and steals the dead woman's baby; finally Jenny sees Cane when he returns to the woods to replace Jack's coat — all this happens and

[52] In general this is true, but we will have to revise this hypothesis slightly in the next chapter when we consider some interesting cases in which memory images are apparently experienced simultaneous with the recounting of a confused and hesitant narrative.

[53] *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, p.176

yet we exit the flashback with a slow dissolve to Carter, still holding the pillow over Jenny's face. The flashback lasts over five minutes. Are we to understand that Carter has been smothering Jenny with the pillow for a full five minutes? The movement into the sequence (slow dissolve) suggests that in the present Carter is recalling what we see. From here, as we have established, narration almost immediately supplants recollection. However, the fact that when we return to the present Carter is still smothering Jenny impels us to believe that the duration of the recollection coincides with the time which has elapsed in the present, that Carter has remembered all this in the time that he has been smothering Jenny. But is it plausible to present such a complex sequence of narration and suggest that it is recalled in a short space of time? When we compare the length and complexity of this flashback to the time elapsed in the present there appears a disparity. But we need only consult our own experience to appreciate that memory often compresses time. We do not always relive in real time the events which memories evoke. Often memory functions as a trigger; a single fragment of the past can evoke a more substantial experience. Thus, in regard to the above example, we can postulate an alternative explanation: when Carter suffocates Jenny he recalls the events which the flashback presents, but while he experiences these memories in a compressed form, we are offered a more complete version of events. But let us be absolutely clear: I accept that memory tends to collapse and compress time, and that in the above example Carter may experience this memory in compressed time, and that this is why when we emerge from the flashback little time seems to have elapsed in the present. But this only bolsters my point: *flashbacks are not representations of mental images*; they are ultimately characterised by narrational autonomy. In flashback-for-memory flashback acts as an analogue of the mental images of the remembering subject.

Just as in flashback-for-narrative there is a shift of emphasis, by which the account of the recounting subject gives way to an autonomous act of narration, so flashback-for-memory, though motivated by an act of recollection, in fact conceals a shift of emphasis — from recollection to autonomous narration. The dominant characteristic in all flashbacks is autonomous narrational exposition. Flashback has a narrational functionality; it is a means to a very specific end: the narration of a past event. It can be argued that the tense of narrative cinema is the 'historical present' — it presents past events as though they were present. Branigan writes, 'flashback may be taken as merely a special instance of the historical present tense where a *character* makes the past present for the spectator by providing narration from a (diegetic) "future" '.[54] Flashback is not content only to narrate past events (as would be the case, for instance, if a character recounted a past event and there was no flashback), but, in order to do so, places itself within that past, making it present.

Conclusion

As early as 1916 Hugo Münsterberg emphasised the distinction between different varieties of flashback, hierarchising those which represent memory over those which are substituted for verbal discourse, which are 'much less artistic [...] aesthetically on a much lower level'.[55] Comparing his preferred use of flashback — as a representation of memory — with the close-up, Münsterberg writes that in both

[54] Branigan, E. (1992) *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, p.176, Branigan's emphasis

[55] *Hugo Münsterberg on Film*, pp.92-93

> *[i]t is as if reality has lost its own continuous connection and becomes shaped by the demands of our soul.* It is as if the outer world itself became moulded in accordance with our fleeting turns of attention or with our passing memory ideas.[56]

But, as Turim notes, Münsterberg's insistence on the similarity between the filmic flashback and the experience of memory might imply a 'rather naïve view of human memory [...] a picture theory of memory, in which recall takes the form of complete images appearing to the mind and in which memories conform to the linearity and clarity of filmic narrative'.[57] She then tempers this interpretation, arguing that one might also understand 'that he never meant his enthusiasm for the parallels between film and subjective memory to be taken so literally'.[58] I concur with this latter qualification, and feel that from the evidence of the use of the device that he had seen in contemporary cinema (the language and technique of which was at that time developing at a much faster rate than it is today, for instance) of the two prime forms of flashback, Münsterberg was merely prescribing flashback-for-memory as a tendency which cinema ought to embrace, at the same time as positing flashback-for-narrative (which has subsequently enjoyed a rich cinematic history) as unexceptional from a psychological perspective. (At around the same time that Münsterberg was writing, one might argue that the cinema was already progressing beyond the analogical representations of flashback-for-memory, moving closer to more properly

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[56] *Ibid.*, p.90, Münsterberg's emphasis

[57] Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, p.30

[58] *Ibid*.

subjective depictions of memory in the 'tableau memory image' of the melodrama.)[59] With Münsterberg, we value representations of mental images over depictions of past events, the motivation for which is fundamentally narrational. But we feel that we must go further and distinguish the analogical depictions of flashback-for-memory from more properly subjective representations of the past.

The majority of relevant existing theory — the neo-formalist theory of Bordwell, the film narrative theory of Branigan, the flashback theory of Turim — has tended to collapse all scenes of anteriority under the banner 'flashback'. This is an oversimplification, and for this reason we will endeavour to distinguish flashback from more properly subjective representations of the past (mental images). Bordwell writes, 'most flashback sequences are motivated to some degree as representing character memory [...] flashback is usually motivated psychologically, as character recollection [...] narration motivates the presentation of the flashback realistically, letting us eavesdrop on the character's memory.'[60] To some extent this is true, but at this stage it is apparent that these comments are unsatisfactory. Here Bordwell essentially discounts flashback-for-narrative altogether, at the same time as grouping all other representations of the past as 'flashback'. By contrast, we insist on a distinction. Having distinguished flashback-for-narrative from flashback-for-memory, in considering the relation between flashback and the mental images of memory, we can dismiss flashback-for-narrative out of hand, since such sequences are more to do with narrating than with remembering. The following question remains: what is the relation between flashback-for-memory and the mental images of memory? We have established that in flashback-for memory the relation between

[59] *Ibid*., p.39

[60] *Narration in the Fiction Film*, pp.78-79.

flashback duration and time elapsed in the present is incongruous: flashback duration appears longer than the time which seems to elapse in the present. The relation between flashback-for-memory and the mental images of memory is *analogical*. We will presently see that cinema in fact possesses far more effective means of representing the experience of memory in time. Thus we shall henceforth distinguish *act of memory* from flashback-for-memory.

Chapter 2. Act of Memory

On the distinction between flashback-for-memory and act of memory

There are several aspects by which act of memory is distinguished from flashback-for-memory as we defined it in Chapter 1. Firstly, the dissolve and nondiegetic music cue, which frequently mark the passage into flashback-for-memory in classical cinema, are generally absent from act of memory. Flashback-for-memory is typically presented as a deliberate and motivated act of recollection. By contrast, act of memory is often involuntary, overwhelming the remembering subject. Unlike flashback-for-memory, the duration of act of memory coincides with the time which seems to elapse in the present. Moreover, the amplitude of act of memory usually coincides with the duration of the recollection, while in flashback-for-memory there is typically a disparity between amplitude and duration.[61] We will come to consider the form of act of memory more closely, but for now we may note that, generally speaking, it is formally distinguished from flashback-for-memory inasmuch as the image often cuts back and forth between the remembering subject in the present and the recollection itself, thereby establishing a sense of the intensity of the experience of memory in time. By contrast, flashback-for-memory generally follows the essential form of what we will call the recollection circuit. The basic form of the recollection circuit is this: an opening parenthetic shot of the remembering subject in the present is followed by a dissolve/cut to the remembered scene, and the circuit resolves with a closing parenthetic return to the remembering subject in the present.

The fundamental difference, however, between flashback-for-memory and act of memory is that flashback-for-memory is concerned primarily — as is flashback-for-

[61] Cases in which a character's life passes before her eyes at the moment of death are a notable exception to this general rule.

narrative — with narration, while *act of memory is a depiction of the experience of memory*. These are two quite distinct modes of representing the past and each has a very different relation to memory: flashback-for-memory is motivated and justified by an act of recollection, but here the remembering subject is a tool, the moment of recollection a convenience. In place of representations of actual mental images, we are offered objective representations of the remembered scene, the relation of which to the mental images of memory is analogical. By contrast, act of memory is a depiction of the experience of memory itself; it consists of representations of mental images. The table below offers a sketch of the terms of the distinction, which are further explained on the following page:

Factor	**Flashback-for-memory**	**Act of memory**
1. Time: relation between duration of sequence to time elapsed in present	fundamental disparity / impossible to determine (see factor 2)	identical; exact coincidence (see factor 2)
2. Circuit resolution	usually resolved, though in modern cinema many recollection sequences remain unresolved. We will (negatively) identify such sequences as flashback-for-memory	always resolved (if the closing parenthesis of the circuit is omitted the sequence is flashback-for-memory)
3. Primary emphasis (narration or recollection?)	narration supplants recollection	recollection – we typically cut back and forth between remembering subject in present and the recalled scene
4. Length	generally longer	generally shorter

The above table does not represent an exhaustive system of distinction, but it does offer an overview of the relevant factors in the comparison. The hierarchical organisation of the table offers a general picture of the system of calibration by which

we may distinguish between the two sorts of representations of the past in practice. We have already established the two most significant factors in the distinction: 1. 'Time' — factor 1 can only be determined if there is circuit resolution (factor 2), and so factors 1 and 2 will be considered together — and 3. 'Emphasis' (narration or recollection?). We are able to identify act of memory as representing the mental images of memory primarily because of (factor 1) the identity between its duration and time elapsed in the present. For this reason, the closing parenthesis of the recollection circuit is indispensable if we are to distinguish a sequence as act of memory. The relevance of factor 4 is this: given that acts of memory are representations of mental images as they are experienced in time, in general these are necessarily of short duration, owing to the contingent factors of the remembering subject's environment. Factor 4 becomes active where it is difficult to determine (factor 1) the relation between sequence duration and time elapsed in the present because of a continuous distraction (such as listening to music or watching television), which arrests action in the present.

Saint Augustine's discussion of time

We may better understand the form of the past which flashback presents and the ways in which it is distinct from more properly subjective representations of the past (the mental images of memory) through recourse to Saint Augustine's discussion of time. The notion, common in our everyday language, of the 'present' is an abstraction. Augustine writes,

> the only time that can be called present is an instant, if we can conceive of such, that cannot be divided even into the most minute fractions, and a point of

> time as small as this passes so rapidly from the future to the past that its duration is without length.[62]

What we call the 'present' is an infinitely renewed instant which cannot be grasped. The moment I think or speak of the present, it is already past. The present contains within it the past which it once was and the future which it will be. Thus when we speak of the present, we must remember that it is an abstraction. But it is not only the present that does not exist. In his meandering discussion, Augustine considers the existential properties of the past and the future. He posits an opposition between one who declares that past and future do not exist, and another who insists that they do: 'people who describe the past could not describe it correctly unless they saw it in their minds, and if the past did not exist it would be impossible for them to see it at all'.[63]

Circling around, proffering arguments now in favour of one thesis and now opposing these with the arguments of the other, Augustine finally accepts that past and future do not exist, but nevertheless insists on discovering 'where they are', concluding, 'wherever they are, they are not there as future or past, but as present. For if, wherever they are, they are future, they do not yet exist; if past, they no longer exist.'[64] The past no longer exists; the future does not yet exist. Whenever we remember the past or imagine the future, we do so from the present. All that exists is the infinitely renewed point of the present, and it is only in terms of this pure abstraction that past and future have any claim to existence. The three times of which

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[62] Saint Augustine, (1961) *Confessions*, trans. Pine-Coffin, R.S., London: Penguin (first written 398 AD), p.266

[63] *Ibid*., p.267

[64] *Ibid*.

we speak with such assurance in everyday language — past, present, and future — do not exist. We may speak of three times on the condition that we remember that they exist only in the mind: 'a present of past things, a present of present things, and a present of future things [...] The present of past things is the memory; the present of present things is direct perception; and the present of future things is expectation.'[65]

This is relevant to our discussion of cinema, since in cinema's representations of anteriority, the past generally appears as it was when it was present.[66] (And representations of the future — objective flash-forwards or representations of imagination which we might call 'anticipation' — generally depict the future as though it were present.) We see this clearly in Deleuze's discussion of flashback, which is based on Henri Bergson's notion of the 'recollection image'.[67] An abstraction, Bergson's 'pure recollection' is a virtuality. The Recollection image 'actualises a virtuality'. Thus 'the recollection-image does not deliver the past to us, but only represents the former present that the past "was" '.[68]

Through flashback, which generally appears in an objective representation of the past as it was, with all its details, localised in time, cinema magically grants access to Bergson's 'pure recollection'. The pointed end of Bergson's diagrammatic cone[69]

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[65] *Ibid*., p.269

[66] For an interesting discussion of the tense of flashback see Yaffe, G. (2003) 'Time in the Movies', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 27, No.1 (August 2003), pp.115-38.

[67] Bergson, H. (2004) *Matière et Mémoire*, trans. Paul, N.M. & W.S. Palmer, New York: Dover. (first published 1912).

[68] Deleuze, G. (1988) *Cinéma 2: L'image-temps*, trans. Tomlinson, H. & R. Galeta, London: Continuum, p.52.

[69] For a reproduction of Bergson's diagram see section II of this chapter.

represents the present, and the broad base pure recollection; where cinema presents the past in the rich and full form of flashback, this seems to correspond to the 'wider planes of consciousness' that are closer to the base of pure recollection.[70] In contrast to the magically full depiction of memory which flashback presents, act of memory places emphasis on the experience — often fragmented and atrophied — of memory in time.

By declaring 'act of memory *is* memory' or 'act of memory consists of representations of mental images', I anticipate the following objections: What constitutes a representation of a mental image? What are the characteristics by which we can define a mental image? Are mental images memories of perceptions (in which case all memory images would take the form of point-of-view shots from the past)? If so, why, in so much of what you define as act of memory, does the remembering subject appear within the memory-image? No doubt these are pertinent questions. In this connection Branigan offers some instructive comments, reminding us,

> when we see what we believe a character to be thinking about, we may only be seeing the object of his or her thought as it exists independently in the world even if an obsessive desire for the object continues to be represented.[71]

Just as we often see the object of a character's gaze while he or she remains onscreen,[72] so the mental images of memory and imagination often assume an

[70] Bergson, H. *Matière et Mémoire*, p.322

[71] Branigan, E. (1992) *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, London: Routledge, p.176

[72] Consider the standard shot-reverse shot treatment of dialogue, in which actual point-of-view shots are rare; rather, in a shot of A talking, B's shoulder is usually visible in the foreground.

objective form, in which the remembering subject imagines herself within the remembered scene. This seems to be cinema's equivalent of the free-indirect mode in literature.

As suggested above, sometimes the distinction between act of memory and flashback-for-memory will hinge on factor 2 — whether or not the recollection circuit is resolved.

The unresolved recollection circuit

Many modern films do not recognise classical cinema's recollection circuit. Often the post-recollection shot of the remembering subject in the present is omitted, conferring a bridging function upon the past scene. What relation do such sequences have to the mental images of memory? Consider, for instance, the episode in *8 ½* which is prompted by the words 'asa nisi masa', which Maia, the psychic woman, writes on a blackboard. As we have said, act of memory represents the experience of memory in time, and only the resolution of the recollection circuit will confer upon it this quality. Here, then, the crucial aspect in the distinction is the absence of the closing parenthetic shot of the recollection circuit (factor 2); we are unable to determine (factor 1) the relation between sequence duration and time elapsed in the present, since upon exiting the sequence we shift to a new scene altogether. The omission of the closing parenthetic shot distinguishes the sequence as flashback-for-memory: narration supplants recollection. The sight of the words upon the blackboard, the uncanny thrill of Maia's trick, prompts Guido's recollection. Thus we are given to understand that Guido is remembering. At the same time, the question — 'What does

that [asa nisi masa] mean?' — which the magician puts to Maia immediately before we enter the sequence, though it does not elicit a verbal response (from either Maia or Guido) that would lead us into the sequence (as in flashback-for-narrative), might nevertheless be understood as justifying Guido's recollection, the question to which the sequence is the response. But it is only possible to discern the shift from recollection to narration retrospectively, when the sequence ends without returning to the original present.

Complicated cases and exceptions

As noted above, in some cases, despite the presence of the closing parenthetic shot of the recollection circuit, it is difficult to determine (factor 1) the relation between the duration of a past scene and the time which elapses in the present, and consequently difficult to distinguish between act of memory and flashback-for-memory, since action in the present remains in stasis. Consider, for instance, the flashback in *Casablanca*. In the present, Rick instructs Sam to play 'As Time Goes By'. Sam plays, the camera moves in toward Rick and we enter a flashback, which presents an exposition of Rick and Ilsa's romance in Paris as the German Army progress through France. When the German forces enter Paris, Rick arranges to meet Ilsa at the train station, but she jilts him. When we return to the present, Sam is still playing 'As Time Goes By'. How, in a case such as this, are we to determine (factor 1) the relation between sequence duration and time elapsed in the present? How long has Sam been playing? Factor 1 does not help us here; and the fact that the sequence has a resolving shot (factor 2) simply means that it is *not necessarily* flashback-for-memory — in principle it might still be act of memory. In this case, consideration of (factor 3) the primary emphasis of the sequence and (factor 4) the length of the

sequence, enables us to distinguish the sequence as flashback-for-memory: throughout the sequence we do not once return to Rick in the present (primary emphasis = narration rather than remembering); also, the length of the sequence opposes the notion that the scenes presented are experienced as memories by Rick in the time of the present. The sequence seems to exist outside the temporality of the present; its duration is inserted within a fissure of the present.

Modern anomalies

Modern cinema presents many cases in which it is difficult to distinguish act of memory from flashback-for-memory. *This Sporting Life* features both flashback-for-memory and act of memory, but establishes no formal distinction between the two. In the first minutes of the film we cut back and forth autonomously between the present — Frank is injured playing rugby and arrives at the dentist's — and the past — Frank drills in a mine and then converses with Margaret. When, in the present, Frank inhales chloroform at the dentist's, a past scene emerges — Frank invites Margaret for a walk and an argument ensues — which seems to be an act of memory. But when, in the present, satisfied that Frank is unconscious, the dentist removes the tube from his mouth, and we enter a new past — Frank and team-mates try to gain access to a dancing hall — narration again assumes an autonomous aspect (these are no longer memory images, since Frank is unconscious). Later, when Frank arrives at the Christmas party and ensconces himself in a bedroom, the brief excerpts of the past which emerge — Frank takes Margaret and the children for a drive and announces that they will make a day of it — are presented as acts of memory. But as we return to the past scene, in an extended sequence of their day out in the park, and from here pass into an entirely new past — Frank plays rugby, then sings in a pub, arrives home

drunk, and the next day makes love to Margaret — these sequences are flashbacks, and, as we have seen, the second flashback emerges from the first autonomously. Nevertheless, the film posits a reverse causality between the conclusion of this second flashback — the image becomes blurred as the camera moves in and Frank unfastens Margaret's skirt — and the present to which we return — Frank grips the bed post tightly, a figure for the sexual satisfaction imminent in the flashback — suggesting that Frank is recalling these scenes. In bed in the present, Frank continues to remember, and a flashback presents the scene the next morning, in which he is upset when Margaret gives him a cold reception. Again, from within this past a new past emerges autonomously — Frank patronises the rugby club bar and then visits Mrs Weaver. When, after flirting with her, Frank rejects Mrs Weaver, we return to the present, and again it is clear that Frank is remembering this scene. In each case there is subjective causality (recollection) in the shift from the present to the initial past scene; this past is then ruptured by an autonomous incision, from which emerges, apparently arbitrarily, a second past; upon passing from this second past to the present, the film again posits a reverse subjective causality, presenting this second past as Frank's memory. Objective flashback and act of memory are here merged in a sophisticated narration which does not recognise the terms of our distinction, combining subjective causality with authorial fiat.

But ambiguous cases such as this, which refuse to fit neatly into our system, in no way diminish the value of the proposed distinction. In order to explore cinema's mental images, we must first of all distinguish acts of remembering from narration. In this way we have thus far considered and largely rejected the relation between flashback and the mental images of memory. Generally speaking, theory — Bordwell

(*Narration and the Fiction Film*), Branigan (*Narrative Comprehension and Film*), Turim (*Flashbacks in Film*) — has tended to collapse all representations of the past under the banner 'flashback'. Current terminology is inadequate and, more importantly, the use of current terminology is inconsistent and insubstantial. In order to establish a more effective terminology which accounts for the various forms, we might begin by considering the precise shortcomings of existing vocabulary. Let us consider the term *recollection* more closely. We have established that act of memory depicts mental images, while the primary concern of flashback is the narration of a past event. Now we will endeavour to situate this term more precisely in the context of this distinction. Does the verb 'to recollect' seem to have more to do with narrating or remembering? The word derives from the Latin *recolligere*, 'to gather again' (re- = 'again', colligere = 'to collect'). This etymology, supported by a simple consideration of everyday usage of the term — 'Do you recollect the time when...?', etc. — demonstrates that the term 'recollection' is more or less synonymous with 'remembrance'. And if the notion of 'gathering again' is an image apposite to the representation of memory, then we might here introduce a second term, equally etymologically appropriate, which is synonymous with 'narrating'. I propose the verb 'to recount', which derives from the Old French *reconter*, 'to relate again' (conter = 'to relate'/'to reckon'). The term 'relate' necessarily implies an act involving more than one person, and is thus consistent with our understanding of flashback-for-narrative, which is narrated *to someone* — either directly to the spectator, or indirectly through the intermediary of another character. We have shown, too, that flashback-for-memory, though prompted by memory, in fact conceals a shift of emphasis from remembering to narrating, and is thus ultimately concerned with narration. And, again, a consideration of the use of the verb in everyday language — 'to recount an

anecdote', etc. — further supports this proposition.[73] Flashback is a recounting, and is primarily concerned with the narration of a past event; act of memory is recollection, an audiovisual rendering of mental images, a depiction of the experience of memory in time.

In the remainder of this chapter we will first consider the prompts of act of memory; then we will examine cognitive and philosophical theories of memory. Next we will examine grammatical aspects of act of memory, such as how it is formally distinguished from flashback-for-memory, and the variations in form which modern cinema has brought to act of memory. Here we will also examine purely auditory memories, and consider how Bergson's theory of memory can help us to understand the specific form of fragmented and atrophied representations of memory. This will lead us to consider the role of imagination in certain representations of memory, and depictions of distorted and false memories. Then we will discuss *recalled voices* as a sub-branch of act of memory. Finally we will consider the functions of act of memory proper (that is visual- and sound-images, as opposed to the asynchronous representations of recalled voices).

[73] This terminology is in opposition to that of Bordwell, who uses the term *recount* to refer to purely verbal descriptions of past events and *enactment* to refer to the narrative presentation of 'prior events as if they were occurring at the moment, in direct representation', *Narration and the Fiction Film*, pp. 77-78.

I. Prompts

Proust stresses that memory exists *potentially*; it dwells in the objects and events which can prompt it:

> The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling. And it depends on chance whether or not we come upon this object before we ourselves must die.[74]

Bergson, too, insists that the realisation of memory is dependent upon chance. 'Essentially fugitive,' memories, 'become materialised only by chance, either when an accidentally precise determination of our bodily attitude attracts them, or when the very indetermination of that attitude leaves a clear field to the caprices of their manifestation.'[75]

Since, like flashback-for-memory, act of memory is prompted by an act of recollection, we find many consistencies between the materials and situations which prompt act of memory and our previous discussion of the prompts of flashback-for-memory.

<u>Audio recording</u>

Sometimes the act of listening to an audio recording prompts memory images. In *The Passenger* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1975) it is the audio recording of his

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[74] Proust, M. (1981) *À la recherche du temps perdu, Vol.1, Du côté de chez Swann*, trans. Scott Moncrieff, C.K. & T. Kilmartin, London: Penguin (first published 1913), pp.47-48

[75] Bergson, H. (1911) *Matière et Mémoire*, p.129

conversation with the dead man, Robertson, which prompts Locke's recollection of their conversation.[76] In *Memorias del Subdesarrollo*, Sergio, rather masochistically, listens to an audio recording he made of himself and his wife Laura having an argument which led to their separation. Throughout most of the sequence we remain with Sergio in the present, as he absent-mindedly fiddles with the belongings Laura left behind. But occasionally the scene in the present is interrupted with brief memory images. For instance, when Sergio wears the monocle, we cut to Laura sitting in bed with her book, looking up at him. This appears to be a genuine memory image from the scene of their conversation. But the next memory image seems to represent another past entirely. While in the recording he mocks Laura, saying that her beauty is artificial but that he is all the more attracted to her for that reason, in the present Sergio fiddles with her knickers, stretching them between his hands. An insert then appears — a memory image of Laura, naked, stepping into the shower. But as the recorded conversation continues it is clear that Laura does not take a shower, thus this image apparently belongs to another scene entirely; it is prompted by the knickers with which Sergio is fiddling, and is unrelated to the audio recording.

Later, Sergio listens to the recording again and this time, as in *The Passenger*, we enter the past scene. But these images cannot be designated as representations of memory. We enter the past scene with a shot of Laura's shoes and a garment of clothing lying by the foot of the bed. From here, while the conversation continues and the argument escalates, the camera embarks on a forensic exploration of the room and the incidental scattered objects therein. When Sergio reveals to Laura that he has

[76] This scene might be identified as flashback, since it is of a significant length and we do not cut back to Locke in the present until the end of the recording. However, here the length of the memory is justified by the recording. The recording acts as an artificial stimulus which inspires and perpetuates the remembered scene.

recorded their argument for his subsequent amusement, the argument reaches a climax: Laura tries to grab the cassette recorder, and she and Sergio both enter the shot. (Henceforth the camera remains on Laura as she breaks down hysterically and declares that she is leaving.) But up until this point, while the camera autonomously explores the objects around the room without filming either interlocutor, what is the status of the images? Certainly during the conversation, Sergio's attention would have been concentrated on himself and Laura. On the other hand, it is not necessary that his mental images while listening to the recording should reproduce those perceptions he experienced during the conversation. One might argue that the autonomous exploration of the camera prior to the climactic point in the argument represents Sergio's imaginative memory of the scene of the argument, that here the physical space of the scene of the argument has assumed enhanced significance; he invests the arbitrary details of the scene (which we might articulate thus: 'her shoes were on the floor ... there were some magazines on the bed') with hyperbolic significance.

Photograph

Like the memories prompted by audio recordings, the recollections of a character who looks at a photograph are voluntary memories; the photograph is a memory-producing tool, and one rarely stumbles across such a photograph by accident (in cinema or in life).[77] Thus these recollections are often maudlin, sentimental, and are therefore accompanied by nondiegetic score, creating an idealisation of the past. Near the end

[77] We find an exception to this in *—Rumble Fish* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1983), when the Motorcycle Boy turns the page of the book he is reading to find a photograph of him and his younger brother as infants. This prompts a sequence of subjective sound which presents recalled voices of the two boys playing. Here, as is often the case where a character deliberately seeks out or examines a photograph with the intention of remembering, the ensuing memory images are nostalgic.

of *The Wings of Eagles* (John Ford, 1957) Stig reminisces about his family life prior to the accident which left him paralysed. The recollection is prompted by a photograph of one of his now grown-up daughters in a swimming costume. As Stig looks at the photograph we dissolve to his wife, Min, as a young woman, in an identical pose to that of the daughter in the photograph. But the memories prompted by photographs are not necessarily nostalgic — we will later see how in *Esta Noite Encarnarei no Teu Cadáver* (*This Night I'll Possess Your Corpse*) (José Mojica Marins, 1966) a photograph prompts a harrowing memory.

Visual resemblance

Often the prompt is simply a visual resemblance between a present perception and a memory image. In *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* (David Lynch, 1992), when Leland Palmer arrives home and sees his daughter Laura sitting with her best friend Donna, the posture of the two girls (one of Platonic intimacy) prompts a memory of his view through the trailer window of Laura and Ronnette Polanski.

Sometimes a person perceived revives a memory of that same person. In the opening scene of *Gangs of New York* (Martin Scorsese, 2002), the young Amsterdam marches with his father the Priest, who leads a gang of Irish immigrants through a catacomb and out of a warehouse, to a battle with a rival gang of 'natives'. Here, at the legendary 'Battle of the Five Points', the boy witnesses his father slain by Bill 'the Butcher'. Later, when Amsterdam, a grown man, returns to the city to avenge his father's death, he encounters various people who prompt him to recall his passage through the warehouse with his father immediately prior to the battle.

Place

Occasionally the act of returning to a specific place prompts a recollection. The memories prompted by place are often nostalgic, as in *Great Expectations* (David Lean, 1946), *Magnificent Obsession* (Douglas Sirk, 1954) and *Wild Strawberries* (Ingmar Bergman, 1955). We find an interesting contrast to the maudlin memories evoked by place in *Pursued* (Raoul Walsh, 1947). Jeb is haunted by a violent incident from his childhood, of which he retains only vague half-forgotten fragments of memories. As a child he is plagued by involuntary memories and nightmares, but with time he comes to believe that these memory fragments conceal a dark secret which will explain his life's sufferings, that his future happiness depends upon knowledge of this forgotten night. He becomes mysteriously drawn to a derelict ranch which engenders in him a sense of the uncanny: 'I came straight to this place just as if I'd known the way. There was something in my life as ruined as that house. That house was myself. I'd seen it a million times...' In the film's dénouement, hounded by Grant Callum, the man who for some unknown reason has always wanted him dead, Jeb returns to the dilapidated ranch, fatalistically anticipating that re-enacting the violent threat of the dreadful forgotten night — same protagonists, same place — will engender the memory which will provide the 'one big answer' which has always eluded him.

Dialogue

Dialogue between characters can occasionally prompt an act of memory. As with flashback, it sometimes happens that act of memory is virtually dictated by a given narrative situation. In *Il grande silenzio* (Sergio Corbucci, 1969), Pollicut removes

his glove, bears his hand without a thumb, and challenges Silence: 'Look at my hand! ... Remember what you did?' This challenge to remember more or less dictates the emergence of a recollection.

Parallel situation

Sometimes a similarity between the situation of the present and some aspect of a past scene prompts a recollection. In *A Fistful of Dynamite* (Sergio Leone, 1974), for instance, the excitement of preparing for a revolutionary operation prompts Mallory to recall romantic scenes of his first involvement in the Republican movement in Ireland. Later, when he witnesses Dr Villega collaborating with the enemy, condemning men to execution, Mallory recalls a similar scene from his past in an Irish pub.

Pre-disposition to remember

Underlying the chance encounter with an object or situation — which serves as the immediate factor in activating memory — there is often present a psychological pre-disposition to remember. This pre-disposition is critical in our understanding of the experience of memory. To a consciousness suitably predisposed to remember, anything can potentially act as the prompt for remembering. In Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, while grieving for Albertine, the narrator experiences a series of powerful memories, occasioned by often comically banal prompts:

> And if Françoise on her return were accidentally to ruffle the folds of the lined curtains, I would smother a cry escaping from the inner wound that had just been reopened by the sliver of antique sunlight which had made the modern

> façade of Bricqueville l'Orgueilleuse seem beautiful, when Albertine had said, 'It has been restored.' Not knowing how to explain my sighs to Françoise, I said, 'Oh, I am so thirsty.' She went out and then returned, but I had to turn away abruptly, assailed by the painful charge of one of those thousands of invisible memories which erupted in the shadows around me at every moment: I had just noticed that she had brought me cider and cherries […] It was no longer enough to draw the curtains, I tried to plug the eyes and ears of my memory, so as not to see those orange-tinted strips of sunset, so as not to hear those invisible birds […] The wave of such tender memories, coming to break over the idea that Albertine was dead, overwhelmed me with the clash of such contrary tides that I could not stay still; I got up, but suddenly I stopped dead in my tracks; the same early light of dawn that I used to see at the time when I had just left Albertine, feeling still warm and radiant from her kisses, had just drawn over my curtains its now funereal blade, whose cold, dense and implacable whiteness entered and struck me like a knife blow.[78]

And a short while later:

> One morning I thought that I glimpsed the oblong shape of a hill surrounded by mist, and felt the warmth of a cup of chocolate, while my heart was horribly wrung by the memory of the afternoon when Albertine had come to see me and when I had kissed her for the first time: it was because I had just heard the boiler gurgle as it was relit.[79]

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[78] Proust, M. (2002) *À la recherche du temps perdu, Volume V: La Prisionnière*, trans. Clark, C and *La Fugitive*, trans. Collier, P., London: Penguin., pp.446-49

[79] *Ibid.*, pp.460-61

Sunlight, cider and cherries, the gurgling of a boiler — to a mind suitably predisposed to remember the most banal and remote sensations and incidents, can prompt memories. As the narrator subsequently explains,

> so many paths branch out from each idea within us, as from a crossing in a forest, that at the moment when I least expected it I found myself faced with a fresh memory […] After a certain age our memories are so interwoven with each other [...] We have left traces of ourselves everywhere, everything is fertile, everything is dangerous.[80]

In *The Pawnbroker* (Sidney Lumet, 1965) it is such a predisposition to remember (the approaching twenty-fifth anniversary of his wife's death in a concentration camp) which dictates that virtually any object or situation — his sister-in-law mentioning the anniversary in conversation, a dog barking and some youths assaulting a man behind a barbed wire fence, a young woman's wedding ring, a half-naked black woman presenting her body to him, the cramped claustrophobic conditions of a subway train — reminds Nazerman of his experience in the concentration camp. But despite the explicit visual and acoustic associations between present and past, the approaching anniversary is the constant factor which is in each case the underlying motive for remembering. In his criticism of the presentation of Nazerman's memories, Stanley Cavell asks, 'And why do the breasts of the beautiful black woman, offering to trade herself to him, flash to him his wife's suffering at the hands of Nazi officers?'[81] It

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[80] *Ibid.*, p.508

[81] Cavell, S. (1971) *The World Viewed*, London: Harvard University Press., pp.135-36

seems to me the black woman's breasts remind him of his wife's breasts because they are breasts (the intimate scene with the widow of his dead friend occurs in the dark, and it seems reasonable to speculate that this is always the case), and because on the anniversary of her death he is mentally predisposed to make such an association. That is, six months before or after, the sight of the woman's breasts might not have prompted this memory.

Having enumerated the various ways in which recollections are prompted, we will soon consider some general aspects of the form of act of memory. But first a brief excursus is necessary. We have said that flashback-for-memory bears an analogical relationship to the mental images of memory, while act of memory is a depiction of the experience of memory. In order to understand more fully the significance of this proposition, we must have recourse to theories of memory. Thus we will now consider Alan Richardson's cognitive psychology of memory, before proceeding to examine some aspects of Henri Bergson and Marcel Proust's respective theories of memory.

Cognitive theories of memory imagery

John Frow has argued that since the ancient Greeks, philosophers have employed material and spatial metaphors to describe the process by which experiences are retained and revived as memories:

> the metaphor of the surface of inscription, traditionally a wax writing table (*tabula rasa*); and that of the *thesaurus* (the storehouse [...]). Both metaphors

> suppose a direct relation between space and mental categories [...] and both suppose the physical reality of memory traces.[82]

Aristotle, for instance, writes '*Memory involves an image in the soul, which is among other things a sort of imprint in the body of a former sense-image.*'[83] Frow cites Mary Carruthers, who argues that '[t]his model [...] continues to hold sway right through the Middle Ages.'[84] By the Enlightenment, however, John Locke puts forth a far more nuanced model, invoking the notion of memory as a 'store-house', only to demonstrate its inadequacy:

> our *Ideas* being nothing, but actual Perceptions in the Mind, which cease to be any thing, when there is no perception of them, this *laying up* of our *Ideas* in the Repository of the Memory, signifies no more but this, that the Mind has a Power, in many cases, to revive Perceptions, which it has once had, with this additional Perception annexed to them, that it has had them before. And in this Sense it is, that our *Ideas* are said to be in our Memories, when indeed, they are actually no where, but only there is an ability in the Mind, when it will, to revive them again [85]

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[82] Frow, J. (1997) from '*Toute la mémoire du monde*: Repetition and Forgetting', in Rossington, M. & A. Whitehead (eds) (2007) *Theories of Memory*, p.152

[83] Aristotle, from 'De Memoria et Reminiscentia', in *Theories of Memory*, p.30, emphasis in original

[84] Frow, J. (1997) from '*Toute la mémoire du monde*: Repetition and Forgetting', in *Theories of Memory*, p.152

[85] Locke, J. (1690) from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, in *Theories of Memory*, pp.75-76

Frow argues that even models which understand memory as analogous to a computer retrieval system still rely on notions of memory as a physical location in the brain, which stores memories as matter. '[A] version of this conception', he writes, 'is still the predominant metaphor in contemporary cognitive psychology'.[86] We will now briefly consider how memory is understood in cognitive theory. I have selected Richardson's *Mental Imagery* (1969) as a key text representative of cognitive theories of mental imagery. In considering Richardson's findings, however, we must remember that neuro-science and cognitive theory are constantly developing fields of research, and that Richardson's book is now over forty years old. Nevertheless, many of his findings remain relevant today. As Richardson defines it, 'memory imagery' refers particularly to instances of voluntary memory. Memory imagery 'is far more amenable to voluntary control than all other forms of imagery.'[87] In terms of its utility the memory-image must be understood in the context of the automated memory processes which operate in our day to day life. For the completion of routine tasks 'imageless thought' is often adequate. 'Images of a concrete quasi-sensory type or of a verbal auditory-motor type are more likely to form when some barrier to further thought is encountered and the solution is not immediately available.'[88] As a phenomenal experience the memory-image is often vitiated, atrophied. It is distinct from the eidetic-image in its qualitative poverty — it is of brief duration, 'indefinitely localised', 'incomplete', 'unstable'.[89] Richardson suggests that this is due to the bias in modern western society towards verbal as opposed to visual cognitive modes.

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[86] Frow, J. in *Theories of Memory*, p.153

[87] Richardson, A. (1969) *Mental Imagery*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p.43

[88] *Ibid*., p.81

[89] *Ibid*., p.43

Experience is registered through the original act of perception, but in time the version of this experience which memory yields becomes qualitatively diminished. Richardson quotes a passage from Schachtel which describes this phenomenon:

> The processes of memory thus substitute the conventional cliché for the actual experience. It is true that the original experience or perception usually is already, to a large extent, determined by conventional cliché, by what the person expected to see or hear, which means by what he has been taught to expect. However, everybody who has paid attention to these processes in himself and others can observe that there is, especially at first, some awareness of the discrepancy between the experience itself and the thought or words which articulate, preserve, and express it. The experience is always fuller and richer than the articulate formula by which we try to be aware of it or to recover it. As time passes, this formula comes to replace more and more the original experience and, in addition, to become itself increasingly flat and conventionalised […] What is remembered is usually, more or less, only the fact that such an event took place.[90]

With regard to the material prompts of vivid involuntary memories, Richardson notes that when examined such memories are 'typically found to operate through a contact sense, like smell or touch, rather than a distance sense, like sight or hearing.'[91] In this connection Richardson cites Schachtel's analysis of memory in Proust:

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[90] Scatchel, from *Metamorphoses*, quoted in Richardson, A. (1969) *Mental Imagery*, pp.137-38

[91] *Ibid*., p.138

> The accidental recurrence of a bodily posture or of a sensory perception which he had experienced in the past, on some occasions brings with it the entire vision of that past, of the person he was then and of the way he saw things then. It is a sensation-feeling of a body posture or sensation of the perspective apparatus — not a thought, as in willed recall, which revives the past. In Proust's account, visual sensations are far out-numbered as carriers of such memories by those of the lower more bodily senses such as the feeling of his own body in a particular posture, the touch of a napkin, the smell and taste of a flavour, the hearing of a sound — noise or melody, *not* the sound of words. All these sensations are far from conceptual thought, language, or conventional memory schemata. They renew a state of the psychosomatic entity, that in some respect, this entity had experienced before, felt before. It is as though they touched directly the unconscious memory trace, the record left behind by a total situation out of the past, whereas voluntary recall tries to approach and construct this past indirectly, coached and deflected by all these ideas, wishes and needs which tell the present person how the past could, should or might have been.[92]

Cognitive psychology cannot adequately account for the fact that remote memories are occasionally experienced with such vivacity. Richardson cites the experiments of William Penfield in which vivid memory images are produced by the electrical stimulation of the exposed cortex of epileptic patients. Such results suggest that sensory perception is a kind of recording device and that everything perceived and felt can potentially be re-experienced. This might prompt one to hypothesise that all our

[92] *Ibid*., pp.138-39

past experiences are stored in some region or other of the brain.[93] But Bergson states emphatically and repeatedly that no such storehouse exists,[94] and Richardson notes that since the thirties memory theorists have been in agreement that the experience of memory 'involves a process of *reconstruction* and not the *reviving*' of images.[95] Instead of the notion of a storehouse, a computer analogy has emerged. Memories are catalogued in a kind of binary system by coordinates of numbers and words:

> words and numbers appear to carry information in an economical but skeletonised form. We retrieve the fact *that* I went sun bathing yesterday and *that* I saw Bill on the beach, but we do not typically retrieve in quasi sensory-affective form a re-experience of the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, pressures and temperatures that were involved in the original experience.[96]

But such a quotidian and familiar experience of memory as this bears little resemblance to the rich, vivid existential metamorphoses described by Proust. In the next section we will explore some aspects of the respective theories of memory of Bergson and Proust, and then consider what they can tell us about representations of the mental images of memory in cinema.

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[93] Richardson notes the fact that Penfield's subjects are epileptics as a limitation of the validity of his results — *Ibid*., p.141

[94] Bergson, H. (1911) *Matière et Mémoire*, pp.81-82, p.135

[95] *Mental Imagery*, pp.139-40, Richardson's emphasis

[96] *Ibid*., p.141, Richardson's emphases

II. Bergson and Proust

Memory and perception

Bergson posits the abstractions of 'pure perception' and 'pure recollection'. Just as 'there is no perception which is not full of memories'[97] so there is no such thing as a pure memory image. Pure recollection is a 'virtuality': 'a memory [...] only becomes actual by borrowing the body of some perception into which it slips.'[98] But memory is never confused with perception, as Bergson stresses in a description of voluntary recall: 'our recollection still remains virtual [...] as its outlines become more distinct and its surface takes on colour, it tends to imitate perception. But it remains attached to the past by its deepest roots'.[99]

Actualised in perception, the memory image nevertheless retains 'something of its original virtuality', by which it 'stands out distinct from the present.'[100] Bergson criticises the notion that between memory and perception there is only a difference of degree and not a difference in kind. This illusion stems from a failure to grasp the utility of perception.[101] Nevertheless, between actual sensations and pure memory 'the difference is radical.' Pure memory 'interests no part of my body. No doubt, it will beget sensations as it materialises; but at that very moment it will cease to be a memory'.[102] A virtuality, pure memory remains inert and 'powerless', depending for

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[97] Bergson, H. (1911) *Matière et Mémoire*, p.24

[98] *Ibid*., p.72

[99] *Ibid*., p.171

[100] *Ibid*.

[101] *Ibid*., p.320

[102] *Ibid*., p.179

its realisation upon its potential utility in the present. 'Memory actualised in an image differs [...] profoundly from pure memory.'[103]

Inert and powerless, the past can nevertheless act 'by inserting itself into a present sensation of which it borrows the vitality'. Not only does it then 'cease to be memory', but 'from the moment when the recollection actualises itself in this manner, it [...] becomes once more a perception.'[104] Our variously vague or intense images of 'memory' are, then, a mixture of memory and perception. Between perception and pure memory are infinite 'degrees of tension' which correspond to our variously weak or vivid experience of memory.[105]

Metaphors

Several times Bergson employs the figure of light and darkness. Pure memory is a virtuality which resides in 'darkness'; memory can be realised only in the 'light' of an image; in becoming materialised, memory follows a 'continuous progress [...] from darkness into light.'[106] While pure memory is theoretically independent, it 'manifests itself [...] only in the *coloured* and *living* image which reveals it.'[107] Correlative with the figure of light is that of heat: 'it is from the sensori-motor elements of present action that a memory borrows the *warmth* which gives it life.'[108] Then there is the figure of relative abstraction or actuality, vitality. A virtuality, pure memory is

[103] *Ibid.*, p.181

[104] *Ibid*., p.320

[105] *Ibid*., p.129

[106] *Ibid.*, p.174

[107] *Ibid*., p.170, my emphasis

[108] *Ibid*., p.197, my emphasis

'materialised' in the memory-image, which in turn 'embodies itself' in a perception.[109] The more or less remote images which form part of our perception 'go out to meet the perception, and, *feeding on its substance*, acquire sufficient *vigour* and *life* to abide with it in space.'[110] The memory-image is materialised in the present sensation from which it 'borrows *life* and *strength*'.[111] Linked to the 'continuous progress' by which memory becomes materialised in image is the figure of force: the memory-image is produced when pure memory is 'attracted' by a perception.[112] Bergson also introduces a spatial hierarchy in describing the mechanism of memory: 'memory does not consist in a regression from the present to the past, but, on the contrary, in a progress from the past to the present': from a virtual state we progress 'onwards, step by step, through a series of different *planes of consciousness*, up to the goal where it is materialised in an actual perception'.[113] In describing the process whereby the abstraction of pure memory is realised in an image, Bergson thus employs figures of light, heat, space, force and life, vitality. It is worth noting that Proust draws on a similar range of metaphors in the narrator's famous account of the sensations and memories prompted by the taste of the Madeleine biscuit and tea.[114]

Two memories

Bergson posits a fundamental theoretical distinction between two forms of memory:

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[109] *Ibid*., p.170

[110] *Ibid*., pp.124-25, my emphases

[111] *Ibid*., p.163, Bergson's emphases

[112] *Ibid*.

[113] *Ibid*., p.319, Bergson's emphasis

[114] Proust, M. (1981) *À la recherche du temps perdu, Vol.1, Du côté de chez Swann*, pp.49-51

> The first records [...] all the events of our daily life as they occur in time [...] Regardless of utility or of practical application, it stores up the past by the mere necessity of its own nature. By this memory is made possible the [...] intellectual recognition of a perception already experienced […] But […] while the images are taking their place and order in this memory, the movements which continue them […] create in the body new dispositions towards action. Thus is gradually formed an experience of an entirely different order, which accumulates within the body, a series of mechanisms wound up and ready with reactions to external stimuli [...] this consciousness of a whole past of efforts stored up in the present is [...] a memory profoundly different from the first, always bent upon action, seated in the present and looking only to the future.[115]

The first of Bergson's memories 'appears to be memory *par excellence*. The second [...] is *habit interpreted by memory*'.[116] Of the first 'backward-turning' memory, Bergson writes, 'our past psychical life [...] survives [...] with all the detail of its events localised in time. Always inhibited by the practical and useful consciousness of the present moment'.[117]

The form of this first backward-turning memory seems to be consistent with Proust's descriptions of memory: 'each past day remains deposited with us as in some vast library where there are copies even of the oldest books, which probably no one will

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[115] *Matière et Mémoire*, pp.92-93

[116] *Ibid*., p.95, Bergson's emphasis

[117] *Ibid*., p.113

ever ask to consult.'[118] But the two memories are theoretical abstractions which Bergson posits for the sake of expositional convenience. In fact these two memories are interactive poles of the same movement, functions which 'lend each other a mutual support.'[119] Proust seems to recognise such a distinction of two memories when, in his account of his 'realisation', a year after the event, of his grandmother's death, the narrator explains,

> if they [memories] do remain inside us, it is for most of the time in an unknown domain where they are of no service to us, and where even the most ordinary of them are *repressed by memories of a different order*, which exclude all simultaneity with them in our consciousness.[120]

Bergson illustrates his concept of the two memories and the movement and tensions between them with a series of diagrams.[121]

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[118] Proust, M. (2002) *À la recherche du temps perdu, Volume V: La Prisionnière*, trans. Clark, C and *La Fugitive*, trans. Collier, P., London: Penguin., p.509

[119] Bergson, H. *Matière et Mémoire*, p.197

[120] Proust, M. — (2002) *À la recherche du temps perdu, Volume IV, Sodome et Gomorrhe*, trans. Sturrock, J., London: Penguin, p.159, my emphasis

[121] Bergson's diagram from *Matière et Mémoire*, p.211

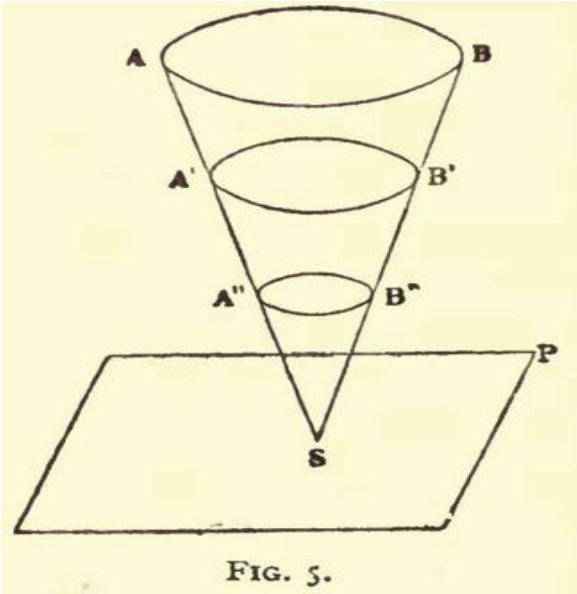

FIG. 5.

Bergson's diagram illustrates the manner in which the recordings of past experience, 'exactly localised' in pure recollection are arranged in a circular envelope, 'the series of which represents the course of our past existence'.[122]

> this outermost envelope contracts and repeats itself in inner and concentric circles, which in their narrower range enclose the same recollections grown smaller, more and more removed from their personal and original form, and more and more capable [...] of being applied to the present perception [123]

Thus recollections 'take a more common form when memory shrinks most, more personal when it widens out'.[124] Past images,

[122] *Ibid*, p.129

[123] *Ibid*.

[124] *Ibid*., p.220

> reproduced exactly as they were, with all their details and even with their affective colouring, are the images of idle fancy or of dream; to act is just to induce this memory [...] to become thinned and sharpened, so that it presents nothing thicker than the edge of a blade to actual experience, into which it will thus be able to penetrate.[125]

The pointed end of Bergson's cone (S) corresponds to the sensori-motor state of action in the present, the infinite space of its base (AB) represents pure memory. 'Our psychical life,' writes Bergson, 'oscillates normally between these two extremes.'[126] It is striking to note that the conical framework of Bergson's diagram is echoed by Proust in his 'mountain' metaphor in *The Fugitive*:

> Our selves are composed of our successive states, superimposed. But this superimposition is not immutable like the stratification of a mountain. A tremor is liable at any moment to throw older layers back up to the surface.[127]

Proust likens the experience of involuntary memory to the eruption of a volcano. At the same time, while in spatial terms memory is analogous to a mountain — and to Bergson's conical diagram — it is distinct from a mountain in that its superimpositions are mutable. While in the second sentence of the above quotation Proust questions the validity of his analogy, by extending the metaphor through the words of the following sentence — 'tremor', 'layers', 'surface' — he affirms it. In

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[125] *Ibid*., p.130

[126] *Ibid.*, p.219

[127] Proust, M. (2002) *À la recherche du temps perdu, Volume V: La Prisionnière*, trans. Clark, C and *La Fugitive*, trans. Collier, P., London: Penguin (first published 1923), p.509

spatial terms memory is like a mountain; in terms of motion it is more like a mountain in motion, a volcano which perpetually remains potentially active.

We will see that all this is relevant to our discussion of filmic representations of memory.

III. Form

Recollection circuit (flashback)

In order the better to illustrate the essential formal distinctions between act of memory and flashback we must first briefly review the typical formal presentation of flashback. As we have seen, the flashback typically adheres to the recollection circuit which we described at the start of this chapter: pre-recollection shot of the remembering subject in the present – memory image – post-recollection shot of the remembering subject in the present. (Of course we except from this pattern those instances from modern cinema — which we have identified as flashbacks — in which the closing parenthetic shot is omitted.) Many acts of memory which are of particularly short duration also take this form.

But flashback does not always appear within the opening and closing parentheses of a recollection circuit. In *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* we shift from one flashback — Sergio and his friend get into trouble with a priest at school — to another — Sergio's nostalgic account of his first sexual experiences at a brothel. Sergio's friend introduces him to a fat prostitute, but he does not find her attractive, and so finds another woman. Since the point of departure for this latter flashback is not the present, there is no specific present to which we might expect it to return. At the conclusion of the sequence we shift to a new present — over images of Sergio in a book shop, his voiceover expresses his dissatisfaction with Elena. Thus there is a metonymic link between the content of the brothel flashback — the young Sergio 'cannot do anything' with the plump prostitute — and the subsequent scene in the present, the subject of which is, again, Sergio's dissatisfaction with women.

Often, where the opening parenthetic shot is absent, we can only identify a sequence as flashback after the fact (retrospective flashback). In *Traffic* (Stephen Soderbergh, 2000), Mexican policemen Javier and Manolo are driven out to the desert by General Salazar's men, who execute Manolo. We then cut to the separate narrative strand of the drugs tsar's search for his teenage daughter. He arrives home to his wife without having found her. We now cut to an exterior shot of Manolo's house, and then a view onto the city from his doorstep. Inside, having given her the news of Manolo's death, Javier consoles his widow Ana. Slow dissolve to Javier driving; tears well up in his eyes and he stops the car and beats the dashboard in frustration. The specific relationship between these shots and the preceding scene prompts us to reinterpret the previous shots of Javier consoling Ana as flashback-for-memory.

The intercutting model (act of memory)

The object of flashback is narration of a past event; recollection is supplanted by narration. By contrast, the object of act of memory is the representation of the experience of memory in time. This radical distinction is manifest in its formal presentation. We typically intercut between the remembering subject in the present and the recollection itself. Often, each successive shot of the remembering subject employs a zoom in. This conveys an impression of increasing intensity which expresses the process by which the memory-images come to dominate consciousness. Shots of the remembering subject in the present with an apposite facial expression, complementing the presentation of the recollection itself, are a significant aspect in creating the impression of memory as it is experienced in time. In this typical filmic grammar we see the relevance to Bergson and Proust's descriptions of memory. Metaphors of light, force, direction and actuality find their filmic equivalent in the

continuing track in towards the remembering subject, in the intercutting between the remembering subject and the recollection itself, each separate shot of the remembering subject a little closer.

Modern variations on the intercutting model

Split-screen

Some films offer alternatives to this intercutting, presenting the memory and the remembering subject simultaneously. Thus we find memory superimpositions in Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* (1935) and *The Saboteur* (1942). In *Dressed to Kill* (Brian De Palma, 1980), Kate Miller's three recollections — the gloved hand, the knickers, the wedding ring — are all presented using split screen: her expression as she remembers in the present continues in frame-left, while a generic representation of the remembered object or incident appears on the right.

Entering memory

In *The Passenger* we enter recollection via a panning movement. While Locke compares his passport photograph with that of the dead man Robertson, there is a knock at the door and he looks up. While the camera remains on Locke we hear him say 'come in', though the Locke before us does not speak. As he proceeds to substitute Robertson's passport photograph for his own, it becomes clear that the continuing conversation on the soundtrack between Locke and Robertson is from an earlier time. (A shot of the sound source — a tape recorder — confirms this.) The conversation continues as the camera pans across the wall before settling on a view on to the desert from the ground-floor balcony; Robertson enters the frame followed by Locke. Thus, in a single panning movement, Antonioni effects a temporal

transformation, Locke reappearing in the past, having appeared in the present in the same shot.

Exiting memory

Two of the past scenes in *Buffalo '66* (Vincent Gallo, 1998) end with a freeze-frame — the first of Billy's face, all blotchy because of his allergic reaction to eating chocolate; the second of Billy begging his father not to hurt the dog after it has urinated in the house — as though such memories contain definite cut-off points: there is no more to remember; what happened subsequent to this is beyond the power of recall because it has no relevance to the present situation.

Audio-visual overlapping

Audio-visual overlapping is frequently employed in the service of continuity. However, where the passage is not simply between one scene and the next, but between the space of the present and the mental images of memory, audiovisual overlap — recalled voices or sounds heard over images of the present, anticipating act of memory and/or recalled voices or sounds lingering into the present, subsequent to act of memory — becomes a temporal juxtaposition, whereby intricate resonances between past and present may be established. In such cases, memory invariably appears first of all on the soundtrack, while the image momentarily remains in the present.

In general, sequences in which the present retains a presence in the presentation of memory — either through intercutting, audiovisual asynchrony, or both — place emphasis on the experience of memory, and are therefore more effective

representations of memory. We find this in both flashback-for-memory and act of memory. Thus, though we have established that the relation between flashback-for-memory and the mental images of memory is analogical, in those cases where the past scene emerges first asynchronously on the soundtrack, sound and image present a juxtaposition of past and present, and, though when we enter the flashback the present recedes — thus relinquishing the tension in the representation of memory — in the moments preceding flashback proper, when past and present are juxtaposed simultaneously, the voices or sounds on the soundtrack are representations of mental images.

There is a particularly interesting illustration of this in a sequence from *Death in Venice* (Luchino Visconti, 1971). Recuperating at the Grand Hotel in Venice after an illness, composer Gustav von Aschenbach is struck by the beauty of an adolescent boy, Tadzio. A series of flashbacks present Gustav's debates on aesthetics with Alfred, a young composer who has definite modern ideas about aesthetic beauty and the creative process. Though stimulating, these discussions are wearying for Gustav, who is less confident and assured in debate than Alfred. In most cases these flashbacks seem to emerge autonomously, but there are one or two interesting exceptions. The first of Gustav's debates with Alfred initially appears asynchronously on the soundtrack, while Gustav observes Tadzio at dinner. The flashback proper follows after some minutes, and given the fact that subsequent flashbacks emerge autonomously, we might consider the exact significance of audiovisual asynchrony here. In the present we cut between Gustav and point-of-view shots of Tadzio, while, on the soundtrack, Gustav and Alfred debate the source of aesthetic beauty. Our interpretation of the precise status of the sound undergoes

transformations with the development of the conversation and its specific relation to the image track at each point in time. Instead of understanding the past conversation as representing the auditory mental images of Gustav's memory (recalled voices), to begin with it seems that it may simply be audiovisual asynchrony preceding a flashback, an autonomous act of narration. But then the development of the conversation becomes bound to the accompanying images in such a way that it seems Gustav is recalling the conversation. When Alfred questions Gustav's notion of the 'labour of the artist', in the present Gustav's expression discernibly changes, suggesting that he is recalling the conversation. Alfred asks,

'Do you really believe that beauty is the product of labour?'

Gustav subtly nods his head, seemingly in confirmation. In the past, after a pause, he confirms,

'Yes, yes, I ... I do.'

Gustav looks up at the boy, and it seems that Tadzio's beauty contradicts his point about beauty being the product of labour, and supports Alfred's argument. While the camera, and Gustav's gaze, remains fixed on the boy, Alfred says, 'That's how beauty is born — like that, spontaneously, in utter disregard for your labour and mind. It pre-exists our presumption as artists!' Cut to later on and Gustav walks outside after dinner. There is no sound from the past conversation for some moments. Then Alfred's voice re-enters as he accuses, 'Your great error, my friend, is to consider life, reality, as a limitation ...' With this we enter the flashback proper, and Alfred and Gustav's conversation seems to be a continuation of the previous debate. The specific presentation here — the asynchronous sound at dinner, the gap, the subsequent emergence of the flashback — leaves room for freedom of interpretation. One might say that the asynchronous sound at dinner constitutes a representation of the mental

images of Gustav's memory, and that the flashback which follows is something separate. On the other hand, it seems that the recalled voices at dinner and the subsequent flashback are related, that it is the same scene. The gap might then represent an actual gap of equivalent length in Gustav and Alfred's conversation. The flashback proper is thus anticipated by an audiovisual overlap which lasts several minutes. We have said that the relation between flashback-for-memory and the mental images of memory is analogical. Here, however, we see how the inventive use of extended passages of audiovisual overlapping can complicate matters. Where flashback is preceded by extended sequences of audiovisual asynchrony, if the relationship between past and present is as significant, deliberate and meaningful as it is here, the sequence can become a vivid representation of the mental images of memory.

Asynchrony

Sometimes sound and image remain asynchronous for the duration of the presentation of memory. The most common form of such audiovisual asynchrony is the recollection of voices. But occasionally sound-images from the past reappear on the soundtrack. In the final story of *Soy Cuba* (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1964), when the peasant Marianna returns to his shack in the mountains after it has been devastated by an air raid, the soundtrack presents a reprise of the noise his wife made with a wooden grinder on a bowl just a short time before, as she prepared food while Marianna told his rebel guest that he did not want to join the revolution. The extra-diegetic recurrence of the sound seems to represent Marianna's recollection of this conversation, marking the transformation of his attitude: he is now willing to join the revolution. That this transformation occurs in so short a space of time demonstrates

the radicalising potential of personal experience: it can take just this long for a man unconcerned with politics to become a militant.

Sometimes one memory will prompt another, and sound and image become split, each presenting a separate past. In *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, 1986), on his way to see Detective Williams, Jeffrey sees a man — the Yellowman — he recognises from his surveillance of Frank's building. Jeffrey notes from the sign on the door that his name is Detective Gordon, and this prompts him to recall Frank's conversation with Ben. Frank is framed in close-up as he explains, 'Gordon went right up to him in broad daylight of course, 'cause he's the man right ...' This prompts a further memory, precipitating a break in synchrony: while Frank's voice continues on the soundtrack ('... and took those drugs away and it was beautiful!'), the image cuts to the Yellowman and the well-dressed man climbing a fire escape to witness the killing of the drug dealer. Through this asynchronous use of sound, Lynch establishes the mental processes which enable Jeffrey to identify the Yellowman as Detective Gordon.

Nostalgia

The majority of nostalgic representations of memory share certain basic formal properties: the presence of wistful nondiegetic music, the total absence of diegetic sound, and frequently the use of slow-motion images. These moments of nostalgia usually appear toward the end of a film and often repeat previous narrative events.[128]

[128] Examples of such sequences include: Mallory's recollections of pre-revolutionary Ireland in *A Fist Full of Dynamite*, Private Bell's generic memories of his wife in *The Thin Red Line*, Stig's reminiscences of family life prior to his accident in *The Wings of Eagles*, Cable's reminiscence of his short-lived period of domestic contentment with Hildy in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, the Jenny Agutter character's memories of life in the bush in the epilogue of *Walkabout*, Vietnam veteran Ron Kovic's memories of his pre-war life at the end of *Born on the Fourth of July*.

Shared memory

Occasionally, memories are presented as being shared by more than one character. In *The Wild Bunch*, Pike speaks to Dutch of his plan for the gang to steal arms from the U.S. cavalry. Pike turns to face forward and there is a silence. A memory image emerges, presenting Pike and Thornton — Pike's old friend who is now working for the law to apprehend Pike and the gang — at a bordello. We then dissolve to Thornton sitting alone in a geographically distinct location in the present, suggesting that at this moment he, too, is recalling the same memory. We then re-enter the recollection with a dissolve — and in this way we enter and exit the recollection several times, each time alternating to a geographically different present. The implication is that Pike and Thornton, in different geographical locations, experience the memory approximately simultaneously.

Act of memory with narrative

In Chapter 1 we noted that in general one who is in the process of narrating a story is incapable of performing the concentrated remembering that yields representations of the mental images of memory. Occasionally, however, rather than delivering a free-flowing unbroken continuous narrative, the recounting subject conveys a hesitant or confused narrative. Where this is the case, the mental images of memory may be experienced simultaneously with, or in the interstices of, a narrative. Since dialogue requires the active participation of two or more interlocutors, while remembering is generally the subjective experience of an individual, memories experienced during dialogue tend necessarily to be short and fragmentary. Sometimes mental images are

experienced because of the gravity of the recounted narrative. In *Born on the Fourth of July* (Oliver Stone, 1989) when Ron visits the family of Billy Wilson, the soldier whom he accidentally killed in action, his narrative is hesitant and uncertain. Images emerge of the scenes he describes, and the form adheres closely to what we earlier identified as flashback-with-narrative. Here, however, it seems that these fragmentary images, accompanying a confused and hesitant narrative, are attributable to Ron. Making this difficult confession, he forms mental images, and his experience of these images is consistent with, and to some extent accounts for, the hesitancy and pauses in his verbal account.

Impure forms

Earlier we noted that flashback presents a magically full and rich image of the past. While act of memory places more emphasis on the experience of memory, many acts of memory, like flashbacks, present the past with all the fullness and richness of the present. However, some acts of memory appear in fragmented, impoverished form — the memory image appears in superimposition, or the physical details by which the past is temporally and geographically localised are omitted, so that the image of the past is noticeably distinct from how it appeared, or would have been experienced, when it was present. As we have seen, such representations of memory are consistent with the findings of cognitive research. The memory image, Richardson writes, is typically 'like a hazy etching, often incomplete and usually unstable, of brief duration and indefinitely localised.'[129] Or again, 'the memory image, when it exists at all, is typically a schematic reconstruction of something seen rather than a full bodied

[129] *Mental Imagery*., p.43

representation.'[130] Rather than the magically full and rich representations of the past which flashback presents — and which correspond to the wider concentric circles of Bergson's cone — these atrophied representations of the past seem to correspond to the narrower of Bergson's concentric circles, which 'enclose the same recollections grown smaller, more and more removed from their personal and original form, and more and more capable [...] of being applied to the present perception',[131] a more generalised image of the past, consistent with the utilitarian function of volitional memory. For Richardson, such atrophied memories are evidence of the cognitive tendency, with the acquisition of language, towards abstract cognitive modes:

> Language is used more and more to compress, to represent and to express our experience. It is typically of more practical use for me to recall *that* I went to the post office yesterday [...] than it is to recall *what* the sensory-affective experience of being in the post office was actually like. To re-see re-hear and re-feel the experience is uneconomical.[132]

In cinema, impure images of the past are fragmentary depictions, superimpositions combined with excerpts of sound and dialogue. In *Pursued*, Jeb is haunted by vague childhood memories of the night his parents were killed. All he remembers are 'flashes and boots with spurs', memory fragments which the film depicts with superimpositions. Here, the poverty of the memory images is due to several factors: the fact that the incident is so remote in the past; the psychological tendency for

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[130] *Ibid*., p.12

[131] *Matière et Mémoire*, p.129

[132] Richardson, A. (1969) *Mental Imagery*, p.40

children to repress memories of traumatic episodes; the fact that the images are memories of perceptions which were in themselves perforce impoverished (in the final revelatory flashback Jeb peers out from a cellar through a gap beneath a trapdoor); and finally, because over time Jeb's memories of the night have become confused with his nightmares, so that they are as much memories of dream images as memories of actual perceptions.

Such fragmentary representations usually depict volitional memory, and effectively convey the tendency for voluntary memory to yield past experiences only in atrophied form. Representations such as this demonstrate the extent to which memory *is* imagination, consists of nothing more than the images which imagination is able to produce. (Here we anticipate an aspect of mental images that we will discuss further in Part II, when we draw on Sartre's notion of *quasi-observation* in our efforts to better understand the form of some mental images.)

We might consider here some pertinent comments of Bergson. As we have seen, he distinguishes between two forms of recollection: the 'backward-turning' memory which is peculiar to human beings, and 'natural' memory, which it is likely that humans share with animals:

> To call up the past in the form of an image, we must be able to withdraw ourselves from the action of the moment, we must have the power to value the useless, we must have the will to dream. Man alone is capable of such an effort. But even in him the past to which he returns is fugitive, ever on the point of escaping him, as though his backward turning memory were thwarted

> by the other, more natural, memory, of which the forward movement bears him onto action and to life.[133]

The poverty of our memory images might be understood, then, as a consequence of our tendency toward action. This leads us to consider the distinction — explicit in Proust, at best implicit in Bergson — between voluntary and involuntary memory. If we keep in mind Bergson's notion of two memories — a backward turning memory and a memory which follows on the coat tails of our moment-to-moment experience in time — we note that involuntary memory disengages us from the exigencies of the present, inserting us in the past, hence the overwhelming quality of the experience, and the richness and vivacity of the sensations it revives. By contrast, voluntary memory is always constrained and opposed by the demands of our situation and our tendency toward action. This might account for the tendency for cinematic depictions of volitional memory to be vitiated, atrophied representations.

Sometimes, where it revives an incident that occurred previously in the narrative, the presentation of memory is significantly different from the original presentation of the event, demonstrating the extent to which memory and imagination are bound up with one another. In *Subida al cielo* (*Ascent to Heaven*) (Luis Buñuel, 1952), Oliverio's dying mother sends him to Petatlan to fetch a lawyer so that she can make a will. Oliverio sets off, leaving behind his wife Albina. But on the bus is the vamp Raquel, who sits across the aisle from Oliverio, tormenting him with her brazen solicitations. The driver announces an unscheduled stop and Oliverio finds himself stranded at a birthday party. He steals the bus and, as he leaves, Raquel jumps on board. Her

[133] Bergson, H. *Matière et Mémoire*, p.94

tormenting now becomes unbearable and Oliverio finally submits to temptation and makes love to her. Upon reaching Petatlan, Oliverio asks Raquel if she needs anything. She bites into her apple and laughs, 'I got what I wanted!' When Oliverio finally returns home, his mother is dead. Albina explains, 'You barely missed her.' As he kneels at his mother's side, a memory image emerges. Raquel appears before a black background, bites into her apple, spits it out impudently and laughs, 'I got what I wanted', in a reverberant voice, as though spoken in a dream. Oliverio's memory of Raquel's dismissal is presented quite differently to how it in fact occurred. The actual exchange took place in daylight. When Oliverio said goodbye, Raquel spat out a piece of apple. Some dialogue then ensued before she delivered her crushing line. Here, by contrast, the key elements of the memory — Raquel insolently spitting out a piece of her apple, her cruel dismissal — are condensed into one movement. Also, the surrounding physical context is completely omitted. It is worth considering the extent to which the impure, vitiated representations of memory in *Pursued*, and here in *Subida al cielo* — in which the original context is absent, details are remembered wrongly, which reconstructs an event subjectively — approximate the lived experience of memory in comparison to the standard repetition of an event from an objective perspective.

Distorted/false memories

In *8 ½* Fellini offers a significant innovation in presenting Guido's childhood memories in an unreal style. In filmic representations of anteriority — excepting the audiovisually asynchronous and the impure forms discussed above — the past is generally presented with all the objective vivacity of realism that one expects of the present. Here though, Fellini eschews these standards of realism. For instance, in the

scene in which Saraghina dances the rhumba on the beach, the music, around which the scene's action is based (the boys pay Saraghina to dance for their entertainment), has no diegetic source. The overall effect of these recollections is of an event *as it is remembered* many years later, as opposed to how it actually happened, thus demonstrating how memory becomes imbricated with imagination.

The same seems to be the case in many of the past scenes in *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961). These representations of anteriority elude the distinctions which we have established. Most of the sequences seem to be flashback-with-narrative; we see images of the scenes which the man's commentary from the present describes. But here the scenes presented are so unnaturalistic — often there is absolutely no diegetic sound, secondary characters appear frozen like statues, the acting is affected, exaggerated — that we can hardly identify them as flashback, since flashback conventionally has an objective authenticity. As we have seen, act of memory, by contrast, sometimes presents memory in fragmented, atrophied form. Here, despite the unnaturalistic affectedness of these presentations, Resnais captures something of the actual experience of memory. There is no diegetic sound, secondary characters are reduced to statues — because these aspects are unimportant (the man does not remember them); the man is concerned only with his exchanges with the woman.

<u>The author's mental images</u>

Processes of memory are central to the very structures of Terence Davies's *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1988) and *The Long Day Closes* (1992). The films do not follow a causal logic, but are rather composed of a series of self-contained but nevertheless

related episodes, the succession of which follows an apparently aleatory course back and forth through time — just as different spheres of time co-exist in memory. It is not causal or chronological logic but, as Wendy Everett notes, the peculiar processes of memory which govern the structural composition of these films. Of *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, Everett writes,

> each individual memory once recalled may trigger other deeper, less accessible memories. Autobiographical memory can thus be understood to be composed of multiple layers which are elaborately interleaved, or tightly nested one within the other, so that remembering is less a matter of retrieving a single record than of moving gradually through a highly complex structure in which each remembered fragment may lead to others, in a process which is entirely fluid and open-ended.[134]

In her article 'Memory Texts and Memory Work', Annette Kuhn describes Bill Douglas's *Trilogy* (1972-78) as a 'memory text'. Kuhn's discussion of the memory text seems to me to be equally relevant to Davies's *Distant Voices, Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*:

> In memory texts, time rarely comes across as continuous or sequential […] events may have a repetitive or cyclical quality […] or may telescope or merge into one another in the telling so that a single recounted memory might fuse together a series of possibly separate events, or follow no obviously logical or temporal sequence. The memory text is typically a montage of

[134] Everett, W. (2004) *Terence Davies*, p.64

> vignettes, anecdotes, fragments, 'snap-shots' and flashes that can generate a feeling of synchrony: remembered events seem to be outside any linear time frame or may refuse to be easily anchored to 'historical' time [...] events often appear to have been plucked at random from a paradigm of memories and assembled in a mode of narration in which causality is not […] a prominent feature. Delivering […] abrupt shifts of scene and/or narrative viewpoint, memory texts have more in common with poetry than with classical narrative […] structure and organisation seem to be of greater rhetorical salience than content. The metaphoric quality, the foregrounding of formal devices, the tendency to rapid shifts of setting or point of view all feed into the characteristically collagist, fragmentary, timeless, even the 'musical', quality of the memory text, which by and large possesses an imagistic quality that aligns it more closely to unconscious productions like dreams and fantasies than to, say, written stories.[135]

At the outset I stated that I am concerned only with representations of the mental images of characters within the diegesis. But some films, such as Tarkovsky's *Mirror* (1974), *Fanny och Alexander* (Ingmar Bergman, 1982) and *The Long Day Closes*, require us to re-evaluate our conceptual framework. Many of the events depicted in *The Long Day Closes* seem to represent events as they are remembered. The film is autobiographical — Davies is the boy, Bud — and thus problematises our intention to focus exclusively on the mental images of characters within the diegesis. Since the director is the protagonist, and since the film is autobiographical, telling Bud's story not as it happened but how it is remembered and how Davies wishes to remember it

[135] Kuhn, A. (2010) 'Memory texts and memory work: Performances of memory in and with visual media', *Memory Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4, p.299

(and hence present it), throughout the film seems to represent, to actualise, to explore, to celebrate, and to fundamentally be concerned with memory — though there are few instances of representations of Bud's mental images which can easily be incorporated into our discussion. At Christmas we see a tableau of the family at the table. At this point the acting is naturalistic, their voices inaudible beneath the rich score. Then the mother looks across the table to the camera and says sincerely, 'Happy Christmas, lad.' The other five family members turn to look at the camera and say in unison, sincerely, 'Happy Christmas, Bud.' The style in which this greeting is presented, the tableau which is revealed to be a point-of-view shot, lend the scene an artificial impression; it is a non-naturalistic moment which seems to capture or represent this moment as it is remembered rather than as it actually occurred.

Later, while Bud washes his brother's back his mother says, 'You'll soon be grown up, won't you lad.' Bud does not turn upon hearing the voice, and the specific acoustic presentation of the voice suggests that it is not an offscreen voice but a remembered voice. Cut to Bud himself leaning before the washing bowl. He looks up offscreen past the camera. We hear his mother say, 'Go on, get washed, and I'll bring you your tea and toast.' But, again, her voice is presented as a remembered voice rather than an offscreen voice. Bud smiles and slowly turns to face forward, as though reflecting, and then says, 'Okay, Mam.' In addition to the fact that the mother's voice is presented as a recalled voice rather than an offscreen voice, we must add that, by reflecting in this way, Bud appears mature beyond his years. It is as though Davies presents the experience and process of memory *through* Bud; the child actor playing Bud visually realises, through the gestures, expressions and reactions of his performance, the adult Davies's experience of memory.

Flash-inserts

Flash-inserts and eidetic imagery

In her discussion of modernist cinema, Turim considers the relevance of cognitive psychological theories of memory to modern filmic language for the representation of memory. The flash-insert implies 'eidetic' (visual) memory, in which the past is stored as it occurred, and that, under certain circumstances, it is possible to revive a visual record of the past. However, Turim notes that memory is now understood more as 'a process of encoding and decoding information [...] Percepts are encoded as memory in another form and must be reconstituted to become a visual display […] an information-processing model has supplanted the camera-image model of memory'.[136] She cites Richardson, who nevertheless maintains that in a minority of cases 'of "photographic memory" or "eidetic memory" […] something closer to the camera-image model of memory is sustained'.[137] E.R. Jaensch writes, '[f]or the great majority of adults there is an unbridgeable gulf between sensations and images.' However, it 'has always been known that for a few individuals this is not true. Some people have peculiar 'intermediate experiences' between sensations and images.'[138]

Cognitive research in eidetic imagery has its basis in memory tests, whereby subjects are exposed to a test-object or -image for a given duration, and then asked to describe it or reproduce it. But what is the precise relationship or distinction between the eidetic-image and the memory-image? Jaensch writes that eidetic images 'are

[136] Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, p.207

[137] *Ibid*.

[138] Jaensch, E.R. (1930) *Eidetic Imagery and Typological*, London: Kegan Paul., p.3

phenomena that take up an intermediate position between sensations and images.'[139] They encompass a range of images, the experience of which is at one end close to the sensational experience of the after-image, in which the imagination plays a limited role, and at the other end, 'when the influence of the imagination is at its maximum', are closer to 'ideas that, like after-images, are projected outward and literally *seen*.'[140] Whether they more closely resemble the limited sensational experience of after-imagery or the more fluid ideational experience of memory-imagery, a crucial aspect of the quality of the experience of eidetic images is that, like after-images, 'they are in every case *literally seen*.'[141] While eidetic images 'are very distinct, they are not in general confused with real objects. In the majority of cases, they merely have the character of *pictures*, which nevertheless, are seen in the literal, optical sense.'[142] Jaensch finds that frequently, 'an explanation by means of visual memory images is excluded by the accuracy with which pictures are described in every detail.'[143] The 'slightly intensified after-images and the projected, literally visible, memory image are the limiting cases between which the eidetic images lie.'[144] One class of eidetic-imagery, then, would appear to be a profoundly rich and vivid memory-image. This seems consistent with Proust's account of the intensity of involuntary memory. However, the eidetic image is not involuntary but voluntary. Richardson insists that the eidetic-image may 'be recovered at will by many eidetekers'.[145] Eidetic imagery

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[139] *Ibid*., p.1

[140] *Ibid*., p.2, Jaensch's emphasis

[141] *Ibid*., p.13, Jaensch's emphasis. See also p.1, p.14, p.15, p.26

[142] *Ibid*., pp.15-16, Jaensch's emphasis

[143] *Ibid*., p.11

[144] *Ibid*., p.1

[145] *Mental Imagery*, p.31

is, then, associated with a certain ability. Because of its perceptual-like intensity eidetic imagery is often referred to as 'photographic memory'.[146] Eidetic imagery is most prevalent among children, but becomes vitiated with the acquisition of the symbolic codes of language and is replaced by more abstract cognitive processes during adolescence, rarely persisting into adulthood.[147] Films which feature flash-inserts, that is, films which imply that memory is eidetic, Turim suggests, 'recall and reinforce the eidetic recall of childhood that is for most adults lost to some degree. Our nostalgia for our childhood perception is perhaps tapped at some unconscious level.'[148] Of the flash-insert Turim writes,

> We can see how brevity can be taken as a sign of mental processes meant to enhance the mimetic aspect of the representation. A short image correlates with the rapidity of human perceptual and cognitive processes. The isolation of a brief instance of recall serves to augment the coding of an unconscious recall breaking through repressive forces.[149]

Noting that, unsurprisingly, the first reports of "photographic memory" coincided with the development of photography itself, Turim considers the possibility that contemporary technology and modes of representation might influence the way people understand their experiences of memory, if not the experience of memory itself. This notion becomes most interesting when Turim cites the research of

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[146] *Ibid*., p.32

[147] Richardson, A. (1969) *Mental Imagery*, p.12, p.40.

[148] Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, p.208

[149] *Ibid*.

William Penfield, who 'found that electric stimulation during brain surgery provoked extremely detailed visions' of incidents in the subjects' past. 'He argued that this recall constituted evidence of a "permanent record of the stream of consciousness"'.[150] Though Penfield's research was widely discounted by his scientist peers, his studies 'were widely enough publicised to have been a factor in encouraging a literary and filmic treatment of such direct visual recall.'[151] Turim concludes her discussion of modern cinema's flash-insert, writing, 'cognitive psychologists argue that it is likely that all forms of sensory input are part of a perceptual-cognitive cycle in which no such thing as a whole image simply exists in an unreconstructed form.'[152] The flash-inserts of modern cinema are best understood

> as figures, metaphors for memory fragments. The process of reassembling fragments as more complete memories […] is in actuality less of an additive montage […] and more of a fictional aspect inherent in memory, residing at the core of its process of storage and retrieval.[153]

Modernist films which represent memory in flash-inserts 'substitute the image-as-truth for the reconstructed memory and have us believe that while memory is subjective, it is not fractured and recombined intra-subjectively.'[154] Later she asserts

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[150] *Ibid*., p.209

[151] *Ibid*.

[152] *Ibid*.

[153] *Ibid*.

[154] *Ibid*.

that ‘audiences have had their own notions of memory affected by the process of memory imagining represented in these films.’[155]

Turim identifies an isolated case of the flash-insert in Resnais’s *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959) as marking a ‘sense that a new tendency in flashbacks emerges in the late fifties.’[156] Hollywood subsequently showcased the flash-insert in *The Pawnbroker* (1965). The film’s editor Ralph Rosenblum comments on the presentation of memory in the film:

> The time was right for an overhaul of the flashback. In the thirties and forties the flashback had been very popular and always happened in the same way. Joan Crawford or Bette Davis said, “I remember … ” or began reminiscing in a dreamy way [...] the camera moved in on her entranced face, an eerie “time” music saturated the sound track, a shimmering optical effect crept over the screen ... and everyone in the audience knew, “Uh-oh, we’re going into memory.”[157]

Rosenblum’s comments articulate a tired over-familiarity with the conventional Hollywood flashback, and a desire to experiment with a new filmic language for representing memory. Of course, the flash-insert is a specifically modern variety of act of memory, but, more generally, Rosenblum’s comments express an impulse, perhaps kindled in Europe and gaining support from some sections of Hollywood, for

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[155] *Ibid*., p.224

[156] *Ibid*., p.210

[157] Rosenblum quoted in Rosen, A. (2002) ‘ “Teach Me Gold”: Pedagogy and Memory in *The Pawnbroker*,’ *Prooftexts*, Volume 22, No. 1&2, Winter/Spring 2002, pp.92-93

an aesthetic shift in filmic representations of memory — away from flashback and towards act of memory.

Before proceeding further with our discussion of flash-inserts in cinema, we will briefly consider Cathy Caruth's reading of Freud's psychoanalytic theory of trauma.

Psychoanalytic theory of trauma

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1921), Freud discussed the peculiar nature of the traumatic dreams and hallucinations experienced by those suffering from war neuroses. Anne Whitehead gives a useful summary of his position:

> For Freud [...] memory became an effect of the impact of the outside world on the unconscious and preconscious; consciousness took on significance in providing a first line of defence against external stimuli. In Freud's model, trauma resulted from a rupture or breach in the protective shield of consciousness. This was less likely to occur when the subject was prepared for the onslaught of external stimuli, for example through anxiety or narcissism. The symptoms of the trauma victim, the nightmares of the shell-shocked soldier which returned him to the terrible event, acted as a means of trying to establish these mechanisms of preparedness after the fact.[158]

Applying Freud's theory of trauma to her study of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Caruth notes that the dreams and hallucinations of trauma patients are free from symbolic meaning, resisting interpretation and cure, by the very fact of their

[158] Whitehead, A. (2007) 'Introduction to Section Six – Trauma', in Rossington, M & A. Whitehead (eds) (2007) *Theories of Memory*, p.187

'*literality*'. Indeed, '[i]t is this literality and its insistent return which thus constitutes trauma and points toward its enigmatic core: occurrence that then remains, in its insistent return, absolutely *true* to the event.'[159] Caruth makes the important point that the pathology of PTSD 'cannot be defined [...] by the experience itself — which may or may not be catastrophic, and may not traumatise everyone equally'. Nor can it be defined in terms of a subjective distortion of the event. 'The pathology consists, rather, solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it.'[160]

Dominick LaCapra writes of trauma,

> when the past is uncontrollably relived, it is as if there were no difference between it and the present […] one experientially feels as if one were back there reliving the event, and distance between here and there, then and now collapses.[161]

For LaCapra the difference and distance between the revival of the trauma and the traumatic experience itself is 'collapsed'. By contrast, what strikes Caruth most forcefully in Freud's account of trauma is not the collapsing of past and present, nor

[159] Caruth, C. (1995) 'Trauma and Experience', in *Theories of Memory*, p.201, Caruth's emphasis

[160] *Ibid*., p.200, Caruth's emphases

[161] LaCapra, D. (2004) *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*, in *Theories of Memory*, p.207

the period of latency or forgetting, 'but rather the fact that the victim of the crash was never fully conscious during the accident itself':[162]

> The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all. And it is this inherent latency of the event that paradoxically explains the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of historical experience: since the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time. If repression, in trauma, is replaced by latency, this is significant in so far as its blankness — the space of unconsciousness — is paradoxically what precisely preserves the event in its literality.[163]

In Caruth's account the traumatic experience is only recognised as such after the event, since the subject is not fully conscious, not properly aware of its import at the time of the event itself.[164] This is relevant to our discussion of the flash-insert, which is often employed in modern cinema to convey an experience of memory that is somehow traumatic.

Flash-inserts and trauma

Turim notes how the flash-insert has been used to represent the traumatic memory of the Holocaust. 'If modernist techniques of narration are particularly common in these

[162] Caruth, C. (1995) 'Trauma and Experience', in *Theories of Memory*, p.202

[163] *Ibid*., pp.202-03

[164] Caruth's discussion of trauma may be relevant also to some of the filmic representations of hallucination discussed in chapter 7.

films', she writes, 'it is perhaps because the dislocation of modernist storytelling serves as analogy for the psychic damage.'[165] In *The Pawnbroker*, as the twenty-fifth anniversary of his wife's death in a concentration camp approaches, memories of the camp haunt Nazerman. Initially, the memories appear in brief, subliminal flashes, but as the film progresses, the memories become more frequent, intense and prolonged, culminating in the extended recollection of a scene inside a train en-route to a death camp.[166] The Holocaust recollection, writes Turim, 'signals disruption of everyday postwar existence. Violently inserted flashbacks inscribe in narratives a shattering of complacency.'[167]

The use of flash-inserts in modern cinema usually strives to approximate something of the violence of memory, its lacerating potential, its capacity to carve through attention and impose images upon consciousness, to overwhelm the subject, as it were, in spite of him/herself. Nazerman 'is portrayed as a man haunted by images that slice into his daily existence against his will and outside of his control.'[168] Alan Rosen writes of *The Pawnbroker*: 'memory here is dangerous, explosive, even deadly.'[169]

But the flash-insert is not reserved exclusively for representing traumatic memories of the Holocaust. In *Straw Dogs* (Sam Peckinpah, 1972), during the scene in the village

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[165] Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, p.232

[166] Cf. Stanley Cavell's criticism of the use of the flash-insert in *The Pawnbroker* in *The World Viewed*, p.135

[167] Turim, M. (2001) 'The Trauma of history: flashbacks upon flashbacks', *Screen* Vol. 42, No. 2 (Summer 2001), p.207

[168] *Ibid*., p.209

[169] Rosen, A. (2002) ' "Teach Me Gold": Pedagogy and Memory in *The Pawnbroker*', *Prooftexts*, Volume 22, No. 1&2, Winter/Spring 2002, Indiana University Press., p.100

hall in which the children eat party food and the reverend performs magic tricks, Amy, oppressed by the physical proximity of the two men who raped her, and suffering from guilt over her complicity in the first of the sexual acts with her ex-lover Charlie, is overcome by memories of the incident. Her memories appear in intermittent flash-inserts over the continuing diegetic noise of the present. Having initially resolved to demonstrate her courage by confronting and defying her attackers, as the scene progresses — and the memory-images become more and more frequent, slightly longer, and more disturbing — Amy becomes increasingly uncomfortable. In this way Peckinpah effectively conveys the violence of these memories: Amy is overwhelmed; the images appear in spite of her. It is almost as though she suffers the assault all over again. Images lacerate consciousness like blows from an attack; one flinches, parries, tries to collect oneself, but there is no escape.

Where memory is characterised by an essential violence, where the subject is overwhelmed by images, we can consider the relation between such experiences of memory and states of madness. In Part II we will consider the extent to which representations of mental images are bound up with themes of madness in cinema. But what is madness? Is there such a thing as mental illness? Before proceeding further we will briefly consider these questions.

IV. Defining madness

Throughout history different civilisations have understood and approached madness in different ways. In Medieval times people who manifested symptoms of madness were thought to be possessed by demons or to be witches. In later centuries, though it ceased to be understood in religious or supernatural terms, there remained a stigma attached to madness. But by the 1950s, Roy Porter notes, the idea had become conventional 'that mental disorder was not confined to the certifiable. Ordinary people might have 'complexes', and neuroses, it was now said, ran like a watermark through the population at large'.[170] From this time mental illness was reconceptualised, psychotropic drugs were used more and more to help patients to return to or to continue functioning in society, and the asylum system was gradually dissolved: 'Attention shifted to 'milder' and 'borderline' cases, and mental abnormality began to be seen as part of normal variability. A new social psychiatry was formulated, whose remit extended over the populace at large.'[171]

But the rise of the 'psychiatric state' in the latter half of the twentieth century has inspired some fierce criticism. The anti-psychiatry movement, led by Ronald Laing in Britain, argues that madness has 'a truth of its own; and psychosis could be a healing process and, hence, should not be pharmacologically suppressed.'[172] Madness, insists Laing, '…need not be all breakdown. It may also be break-through.'[173] In *The Myth of Mental Illness*, Thomas Szasz argues that towards the end of the nineteenth

[170] Porter, R. (2002) *Madness, a Brief History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press., p.199

[171] *Ibid*., p.208

[172] *Ibid*., p.210

[173] *Ibid*.

century, in identifying and classifying hysteria as illness, Charcot and Freud effectively redefined illness. Since that time a vast industry has arisen to diagnose and treat mental illness. A 'psychiatric game' has developed, whereby patients — because they have found life difficult, because of Christian values inculcated during childhood — are willing to seek medical help and to be identified as mentally ill. Christian doctrine promises that weakness will be rewarded. When the hysteric manifests symptoms of illness,

> [i]t is as if the patient were saying: "You have told me to be disabled — to be stupid, weak, and timid. You have promised that you would then love me and take care of me. Here I am, doing just as you have told me, it is your turn now to fulfil your promise!"[174]

Modern-day physicians indulge and foster such a tacit attitude. But, Szasz insists, this is an insidious arrangement. Szasz understands mental illness in terms of a game-playing model. The patient imitates illness, plays the role of the hysteric or schizophrenic; but if her performance is effective she risks becoming 'typecast':

> the actors' assumed identities may prove convincing not only to their audiences but to themselves as well. They may then begin to act offstage as if they were on it…In many chronic cases of mental illness, we witness the consequences of playing hysterical, hypochondriacal, schizophrenic, or other

[174] Szasz, T.S. (1974) The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct, London: Harper, p.171

> games over years and decades, until they have become deeply ingrained habits.[175]

If convincing, the patient's performance often receives professional countenance from physicians and psychiatrists, effectively encouraging patients to further embrace their roles.

> This sort of feedback to the actor means not only that he can no longer rely on his audience for a corrective definition of reality and his own identity in it, but also that, because of the audience's response, he must doubt his own perceptions about who he really is.[176]

Though patients are essentially complicit in their role in this system, 'few persons who launch themselves on a career of impersonating the sick role reckon with the danger of being authenticated in this role by their families and by the medical profession.'[177] Indeed, Szasz argues, mental patients of the late twentieth century are scapegoats in the same way that women accused of witchcraft were in Medieval times.[178]

Szasz brings out the respective agendas of both patient and physician in his discussion of psychiatry as game-playing. And, no doubt, mental illness is now an industry

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[175] *Ibid*., pp.238-39

[176] *Ibid*., p.244

[177] *Ibid*.

[178] *Ibid*., pp.187-88

which it is in the interests of medical practitioners, psychiatrists, drug companies, and many patients to sustain. But Szasz's peremptory thesis that mental illness is a myth neglects the genuine difficulties from which some people suffer. In the following chapters, as we develop our argument about the relation between representations of mental images and themes of madness in cinema, we proceed from the premise that mental illness is not a myth, but a reality.

We will pursue the theme of madness further in the next section of this chapter. There is one further genus of act of memory — we have anticipated it in our discussion of audiovisual overlapping and asynchrony — which is of such significance to our overall argument that it requires a separate discussion. Thus before we examine the various functions of act of memory proper, we will consider remembered voices.

V. Recalled voices

Remembered or imagined sounds and speech are as much mental images as are visual images. We have seen how memory can be represented asynchronously in the form of remembered sounds. Far more common are 'recalled voices', the remembering subject's memories of phrases which she or another character said earlier in the film.

Form

Occasionally recalled voices are supplemented by a simultaneous visual element, the faces of the speakers appearing simultaneously with their past utterances. In such cases, the visual image of the speaker is usually a generic image — a disembodied head, detached from the physical environment of the original utterance. But despite such formal differences, these sequences function as recalled voices.

Recalled voices and madness

Inasmuch as recalled voices frequently come to haunt the remembering subject, much of what follows in this section directly anticipates the central argument of our discussion of imagination in Part II: namely, that there exists a relation between imagination and madness, which the points of coincidence between cinema's representations of imagination and themes of madness cogently manifest. For the remainder of this section we consider some of the typical functions of recalled voices. We commence with the most ordinary situations, moving progressively towards those situations in which the relation between the presence of mental images and themes of madness is more pronounced.

Function

Nostalgia

Recalled voices sometimes perform a straightforward nostalgic function, as, for instance, when at the end of *Great Expectations* (David Lean, 1946) Pip recalls the voices of Miss Havisham and the young Estella from many years before.

Pragmatism

Recalled voices can also perform a pragmatic function. This is particularly true of the recalled voices of Hitchcock's heroes. In *Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1945) after John Ballantyne is arrested for the murder of Dr Edwardes (whom he masqueraded as while suffering from amnesia), Dr Murchison, whom Edwardes was to replace, admits to Connie that he knew the real Edwardes. This admission contradicts his earlier behaviour — before, he accepted the Peck character as Edwardes for some days when he arrived. Now alone, Connie recalls Murchison's words: 'I knew Edwardes slightly ... knew Edwardes slightly ... knew' — the music swells as she recognises the significance of this slip and goes to confront him.

In *The Naked Kiss* (Samuel Fuller, 1964), upon arriving in Grantville, ex-prostitute Kelly decides to change her life and becomes a nurse in a hospital for handicapped children. In one extended scene she makes an audio recording of the children singing a song which they have rehearsed. Later she becomes engaged to the successful local businessman, J.L. Grant. One day she arrives back at Grant's house to find the song that she recorded with the handicapped children playing on an audio cassette. The next moment she discovers Grant molesting a little girl. The girl flees the house and Grant explains that he is abnormal and this is why he chose to marry her, because of

her wayward past. In horror, she kills him with a telephone receiver. Later, in prison, Griff, a policeman and former client of Kelly, will not believe her story. Kelly cannot describe the little girl and he doubts her existence. Alone in her cell, in despair, Kelly watches children playing in the alley through the barred window of her cell. The music of the handicapped children's song emerges on the soundtrack and Kelly recognises the little girl whom Grant had molested. She calls to Griff in desperation. Subsequently she is able to identify the little girl to him and is eventually acquitted. Here Kelly's recollection of the children's recording performs a pragmatic function. Her recollection of the song signifies that the little girl she is watching at play is the same little girl whom Grant molested while the song played in the background.

Magnificent Obsession begins with wealthy playboy Bob Merrick crashing his speedboat. The equipment with which he is resuscitated is conveyed from Dr Phillips's house, where it ordinarily stays in case he has a heart attack. When Dr Phillips then suffers a seizure, the resuscitator is not at hand, and he dies. While Bob is recuperating we learn that he quit his medical studies when he received his patrimony. When he learns of the unfortunate circumstances of Dr Phillips's death, Bob feels guilty. By chance he meets artist Edward Randolph and confides to him that he feels 'haunted' by Dr Phillips.[179] Randolph recommends to him a philanthropic philosophy of life, which he assures him will bring happiness: one offers assistance to those in need, insists that donations remain secret, and absolutely refuses any attempt at repayment. Randolph discloses that it was the late Dr Phillips

[179] See Laura Mulvey's discussion of the 'reverse Oedipal fantasy' in *Magnificent Obsession*, in 'Social Hieroglyphics — Reflections on Two Films by Douglas Sirk', in (1996) *Fetishism and Curiosity*, London: BFI, pp.36-39

who first introduced him to this philosophy. Bob affirms that he would like to somehow make amends to Helen, Dr Phillips's widow.

> 'But if I just help out some poor joker, why does it follow that she's going to listen to me?'
>
> 'I think you might be surprised at what follows after trying this way of life,' Randolph assures him.
>
> But Randolph then proceeds to caution him purposefully:
>
> 'Don't try to use this unless you're ready for it. You can't just try this out for a week like a new car, you know. And if you think you can feather your own nest with it, just forget it.'

More out of hopeful desperation to make amends to Helen than of genuine solicitude, Bob gives some money to an acquaintance who is in personal and financial difficulty, on the condition that it remain secret, and that he never try to pay it back. The next moment he sees Helen, and exclaims, 'I don't believe it ... It does work!' Bob tries to speak to her of her husband's theory, intimating that he has just received unequivocal proof that it works.

'I'm going to go find somebody that needs a couple of thousand bucks, and my worries'll be over,' he declares.

'I think you've twisted my husband's beliefs into something very cheap,' Helen ripostes and withdraws from him into a taxi; Bob follows her in. She flees out of the opposite door, only to be knocked down by an oncoming car, the accident leaving her permanently blinded. Later, now desperate more than ever to somehow make amends, Bob slowly ingratiates himself with Helen, under the pretence that he is someone else. In his beach house, after learning of Bob's intention to devote

himself to Dr Phillips's model of philanthropy, Randolph counsels him: 'Once you go into it, you're bound. You'll never be able to give it up. You'll find it furnishes your motive power. It will obsess you. Believe me, it will be a magnificent obsession.' Bob devotes all his efforts and wealth to doing everything he can to make Helen's life easier, without her knowing anything about it. He organises a team of the best specialists in Europe to try to restore her sight, but the doctors are unable to cure her and Helen is despondent. Then Bob joins her in Europe and they are happy together once more. When Bob is finally ready to reveal his true identity, Helen admits that she has known who he is for some time. He proposes marriage, but Helen flees, leaving a note, requesting that he never attempt to find her. Returning to America dejected, Bob arrives at Randolph's beach house, where he recalls the poignant conversation in that same room in which Randolph spoke of philanthropy as a 'magnificent obsession'. With Helen no longer in his life, Bob's recollection of Randolph's promise now inspires him not only to fulfil his potential by becoming a doctor, but also to continue his philanthropic deeds. Bob subsequently learns from Randolph that Helen is seriously ill and they fly to be with her. Randolph persuades Bob to operate on her in an attempt to save her life. The operation is successful and as Helen regains consciousness, Bob at her bedside, she discovers her sight miraculously restored. Having witnessed their reunion, Randolph turns away and himself recalls his earlier 'magnificent obsession' counsel to Bob.

These two instances of recalled voices are highly significant. Bob's initial clumsy misapprehension that philanthropy will bring instant personal reward ends disastrously with Helen's accident. When, after Randolph's inspiring promise, he then invests himself in improving Helen's life, though his intentions are good, they

are still self-interested, to the extent that they are inspired by an anticipated catharsis and union with Helen. It is only after his recollection of Randolph's assurances, accepting that Helen is no longer part of his life, that Bob truly embraces Dr Phillips's philosophy, offering assistance without any hope of self-gain. When encouraging Bob to operate on Helen, Randolph says, 'Now you're going to repay that old, old debt in a way that you'd never imagined.' The reason that Bob finally finds himself in a position to help Helen — 'to repay the old debt' — is because he finally abandoned his efforts to help her directly with financial assistance, instead becoming a doctor and embracing the true unadulterated spirit of Dr Phillips's philosophy. When, in the final scene — Bob at last reunited with Helen, her sight restored — Randolph recalls their conversation, it is clear that, for Randolph, it is Bob's selfless embrace of Dr Phillip's philosophy which has ultimately yielded him this reward.

Anxiety

The remembering of past conversations can express simple anxiety. In *Cape Fear* (J. Lee Thompson, 1962) Sam Bowden and his family are intimidated by Max Cady, an ex-convict who bears a grudge against Bowden for testifying against him. As Cady's intimidation intensifies, Sam and his wife Peggy become genuinely concerned. Tossing and turning at night, too anxious to sleep properly, Peggy recalls fragments of earlier conversations. A faint superimposition of the speaker accompanies each recalled utterance. Usually recalled voices reproduce fragments of conversation which we have already seen and heard, and their function is thus primarily to convey that the remembering subject is in a certain state of mind. Here, however, the recalled voices perform the added function of disclosing hitherto elided conversations between Peggy and Sam. In their contrast to Sam's earlier distress when speaking with the

police chief Mark Dutton, these recalled conversations reveal that Sam, aware of his social responsibilities as husband and father, endeavours to maintain a calm exterior to his family. He repeats to Peggy the pragmatic advice that Dutton previously gave him when he openly expressed his distress,

> 'You can't put a man in jail for what he *might* do.'
>
> 'What are we going to do about that man?' Peggy asks in despair.
>
> 'We mustn't let him frighten us,' Sam reassures her, 'that'd be just playing his game.'

Peggy's recalled voices give expression to the subjectivity of a helpless woman in distress. A dangerous man is intimidating her family and represents a threat to herself and her daughter. She can only hope that her husband is able to protect them.

Paranoia

When anxiety becomes excessive and irrational we can begin to speak of paranoia. In *The Accused* (William Dieterle, 1949), university psychologist, Dr Wilma Tuttle, kills student, Bill Perry, in self-defence when he attempts to rape her. Rather than explaining what happened to the police, she manipulates the evidence to make it appear as though Perry drowned accidentally while diving. After the murder, internal monologue becomes a central element in the film, as she wrestles with her conscience, tries to rationalise her actions and escape justice. She becomes paranoid. She thinks she hears something: *What's that? Nothing. My imagination! Oh, watch yourself, Wilma, watch yourself.* But she is justified in being paranoid; Lieutenant Ted Dorgan believes Perry was murdered and with the help of Perry's guardian, Warren Ford, is conducting an investigation. When Dorgan requests to see Perry's

examination paper, this sends Tuttle into a frenzy, as its contents might prove that Miss Tuttle is the 'cyclothalmiac cutie' whom he was to meet after school:

> *Idiot, idiot. I'll get rid of it...No, no, I'll rewrite it. No, it has to be in his handwriting. I can't get rid of the book because then Dorgan'd be suspicious. Oh, wait a minute, wait a minute. Why do anything? Supposing they do recognise me from the description. I didn't meet Bill Perry here that day. I didn't wait for him, I can prove it. Wait a minute! That note I wrote to him...that note!*

But Tuttle is an intelligent woman. In fixing the evidence she has done everything she can to deflect suspicion from herself. Whenever she becomes anxious about getting caught she reasons and rationalises: *The Dean couldn't possibly know yet. No one could know. No one ever will know. I took care of that. A man made a seventy-foot dive and had an accident. That's the way I made it look and that's what they'll think.* She coaches herself on how she ought to conduct herself:

> *The way I acted with Mrs Conner...I must be more careful. I know what a guilt complex is. I mustn't let one destroy me...The law makes allowances for self-defence and so must I. Now remember, remember you must feel that nothing has happened to change anything. You must feel it and I must act it.*

Again, here internal monologue enters during a period of personal crisis. Tuttle has killed a man and it is in her response to the consequences of her action that her inner thoughts become a central element of expression in the film. As Dorgan's

investigation starts to close in on her, Tuttle's guilt and anxiety escalate, culminating in an emotionally frenzied near confession, when Ford takes her to a boxing match. One of the fighters winks at her between rounds, and she imagines it is Perry. When, in the following round, the same fighter receives a barrage of blows, she imagines Perry in his place. 'You're hurting me,' Tuttle says aloud. 'Bill, you're hurting me.' The fighter is knocked out and lurches, unconscious between the ropes, beside Tuttle and Ford. Tuttle covers her eyes and, while the referee counts to ten, in place of the prostrate fighter, she recalls how she dragged Bill from the car and rolled him over the cliff edge. 'I didn't meant to. I didn't mean to!' she exclaims at ringside, to Ford's bemusement.

In *Stranger on the Third Floor* (Boris Ingster, 1940) Ward suffers increasingly paranoid thoughts, which are fuelled by an intensifying unconscious sense of guilt for his part in condemning a man, Briggs, to death, on circumstantial evidence. After his encounter in the hall with the suspicious-looking stranger, and unable to hear his neighbour Maine snoring, Ward becomes anxious that the stranger may have assaulted Maine (his thoughts are presented via an internal monologue).[180] He is about to open Maine's door to check on him, but then reconsiders as he suddenly recalls an utterance of the judge condemning Briggs in court: 'You forgot that fingerprints will always give you away.' (Ward fears that if Maine has been assaulted and he enters his room, he will incriminate himself.) Here, as in the flash-insert, we see the capacity of memory to overwhelm the remembering subject. The judge's voice — paranoid thought — invades Ward's consciousness as though an exterior force.

[180] The fact that his paranoia ultimately proves to be well-founded — Maine *really is* dead and Ward *really is* the prime suspect — is interesting, but does not here concern us. Moreover, the fact that his fears are justified does not alter the fact that he is paranoid.

Taking heed of this memory, Ward decides not to open the door. Though he is aware that the voice exists only in his imagination, Ward nevertheless reacts almost as if to a perceived voice; though its source is internal — memory — his immediate response is surprise, as if to something external. This is quite different from the willed pragmatism of memory; here the recalled voice is expressly *un*willed, overwhelming.

Obsession

Recalled voices sometimes reveal a character's obsession. Often a character's obsession is related to a prohibited desire or object. The opening fantasy sequence of *Belle de Jour* establishes that Séverine harbours masochistic fantasies. During the first part of the film, several incidents — Séverine's interest in Renée's gossip about Henriette working at a brothel, her astonishment upon learning from a taxi driver that there are brothels in Paris — establish that she is intrigued by the thought of prostitution and the brothel, and that she is bored in her marriage with Pierre, who, it seems, does not satisfy her specific sexual desires. In the country club, Husson approaches Séverine and happily confesses to her his own interest in prostitution. He reminisces about a particular brothel, 'I have fond memories of Anaïs's, 11 Cité Jean de Saumur.' Séverine draws away in affront when Husson propositions her, but then recalls his words, 'Madame Anaïs's, 11 Cité Jean de Saumur', this recollection confirming her growing obsession with the idea of prostitution. (In the scene immediately subsequent to this she approaches Madame Anaïs's for the first time.)

In *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg, 1982), after watching a recording of Videodrome, which depicts real life torture and mutilation, Max becomes increasingly attracted to

the show. Watching Videodrome in his apartment he recalls fragments of earlier conversations about the show:

> (Halran: 'Torture, murder, mutilation'; Masha: 'Videodrome. What you see on that show, it's for real!'; Nikki: 'I'm gonna audition. I was made for that show!'; Masha: 'It has something that you don't have Max, it has a philosophy and that is what makes it dangerous.')

These recollections demonstrate Max's growing attraction to Videodrome, a programme which has been established as sordid, inherently exploitative, dangerous and forbidden, but which nevertheless maintains an attraction for Max. Such an attraction to a proscribed taboo object might imply a nascent tendency to madness. Shortly after these recollections, Max experiences his first hallucinations as a result of his exposure to the Videodrome signal. But in order to understand just what Cronenberg is getting at here, we ought not, perhaps, to interpret the film too literally. One can understand Videodrome as a metaphor, a signifier for any prohibited object. Most obviously, one might interpret the film as a reactionary caution against the degenerative effects of explicit material available on VCR.[181] Max's attraction to Videodrome represents a debasing of cultural and moral values; he is a deviant. Just as Séverine is attracted to a prohibited lifestyle, so Max is attracted to a taboo object, which he becomes obsessed by (recalled voices); prolonged exposure to the prohibited object affects his mental stability (hallucinations), and finally impels him to commit criminal acts (he obeys imagined voices which instruct him to commit acts of violence).

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[181] See Koven, M.J. (1997) 'Voices from the Periphery: *Videodrome* and the (pre)Postmodern Vision of Marshal McLuhan', *Postscript*, Volume 4, No. 1 (Winter 1997), p.26

Nightmare

Because the film adheres to the vraisemblance of the science-fiction genre, *Videodrome*'s caution against the dangerous consequences of attraction to a taboo object is pushed to absurd limits. We may try to understand videodrome as a metaphor, a signifier upon which one can project any taboo object one wishes, but as the film progresses it becomes increasingly difficult to hold on to such a metaphor (few taboo objects can force people to kill against their will). But attraction to a taboo object can prompt normal characters to experience mental images in films which adhere to a naturalist aesthetic. In *In a Lonely Place* (Nicholas Ray, 1950), when Laurel starts seeing Dix, she disregards the warnings of Martha and Captain Lochner about Dix's past and his reputation, and refuses to believe that Dix could have murdered Mildred Atkinson. But Laurel's attitude changes after she witnesses Dix lose his temper in a road rage incident. Laurel confides to Sylvia that she suspects Dix may have murdered Atkinson. In the scene immediately following this, Laurel tosses and turns in bed, anxious and unable to sleep. She recalls the earlier warnings of Martha ('They still don't know who killed that checkroom girl') and Captain Lochner ('It was the act of a sick mind, with an urge to destroy ... an erratic violent man'). Here the recalled voices come at a point of personal crisis: having witnessed Dix's violence at first hand, Laurel now feels that Martha and Captain Lochner's warnings were well founded, and suspects that Dix may have killed Atkinson. Naturally, she now regrets the fact of her intimacy with him; and Dix's haste to get married only exacerbates her anxiety.[182] Laurel is certainly not mad, but at the point she experiences these remembrances she is extremely anxious, and such anxiety can resemble madness — one might even argue that it is a manifestation of madness.

[182] The fact that Dix turns out to be innocent of the murder of Mildred Atkinson is irrelevant; his conduct in the road-rage incident is suffice for Laurel not to want to marry him.

Laurel is not insane, but she finds herself in a vulnerable position. Thus we see how ordinary characters become prone to mental images and begin to manifest symptoms, faint traces of madness.

While Laurel might be described as a 'normal' character, who, because of unfortunate circumstances, becomes prey to mental images, we cannot say the same of wounded criminal and fugitive from justice, Johnny, in *Odd Man Out* (Carol Reed, 1947). In a delirious condition, Johnny finds temporary sanctuary at a private table, behind a drawn curtain in a pub. Drifting in and out of consciousness, he knocks over his glass and the sight of the spilt beer on the table prompts a hallucination. He recalls utterances of various characters from earlier in the film; the faces of each speaker appear consecutively in the bubbles of the spilt beer. The recalled utterances mark key moments of anxiety in Johnny's ordeal thus far. Finally, the faces of all the speakers appear simultaneously, each face presented in a separate beer bubble on the table before Johnny. They speak simultaneously in a muddled cacophony, overwhelming him. Forgetting that he is in hiding, Johnny cries out in despair. One might say that Johnny's hallucinations are a symptom of his delirium, but in fact he is depicted as being unhinged before he is wounded (the obscure-angled point-of-view shots en-route to the bank, his dizzy spell on the steps outside the bank). Unhinged from the outset, Johnny is now unable to control the images that appear to his consciousness; here excess of imagination (inability to control the images that appear in consciousness) signifies madness.

In *Carrie* (Brian De Palma, 1976), immediately after her public humiliation (several of her peers empty a bucket of pig's blood on her as she is crowned Prom Queen), as

she looks out at the shocked audience, several of whom break into laughter, Carrie recalls her mother's earlier warning:

> 'They're all gonna laugh at you.'

Now we see a distorted visual approximation of Carrie's point of view: couples and individuals in the crowd appear in the same shot several times — once in the centre of the image, with several reproductions of themselves rotating demonically around this central image. Over these shots we hear Carrie's recollection of significant lines previously spoken by central characters in the crowd: (peers: 'Plug it up, plug it up!'; principal: 'We're all very sorry Cassie'; gym teacher: 'Trust me Carrie, you can trust me'.) Thus, immediately prior to her devastating revenge, sound and image combine to create a nightmarish representation of Carrie's subjective experience of the anxiety caused by this cruel humiliation. As with Laurel in *In a Lonely Place*, here the recalled voices appear at a point of acute personal crisis.

Recalled voices are sometimes experienced by characters who are explicitly marked as being deranged or pathological. In *White Heat* (Raoul Walsh, 1949), gangster Cody Jarrett is obsessively devoted to his mother. The police assign undercover officer Vic Prado to share a prison-cell with him. In briefing Prado, his senior officer explains,

> [t]here's insanity in the Jarretts. Some of it rubbed off on Cody [...] When he was a kid he used to fake headaches in order to get his mother's attention [...] It worked. As he grew up the fancied headaches became real, until now they tear him to pieces. Any minute he's apt to crack open at the seams [...] The

> only person he's ever cared about or trusted is his mother ... He's got a fierce, psychopathic devotion to her.

The opening scenes establish that Cody's wife Verna and Big Ed, a rival within his own gang, are romantically involved. In prison one of Big Ed's pals, Parker, tries to kill Cody in a workhouse 'accident', but Prado saves him, and Cody escapes with a bruise on the head. His mother (Ma Jarrett) then visits him and confirms that Big Ed and Verna are now openly cavorting. For him and Verna to display their romance so brazenly, Big Ed must have been certain that Cody would die in prison. With this, Cody realises that Parker tried to kill him. Ma announces, 'I'll take care of Big Ed.' Desperate, Cody tries to reason with her and begs her not to, but she is adamant. Returning to the workhouse, Cody seems preoccupied and the dramatic score confirms that he is at a point of mental vulnerability. He warns Parker that he will revenge himself on him, and as he walks on with his trolley, he recalls Ma's words: 'I'll take care of big Ed. I'll take care of Big Ed. I'll take care of him, Cody. I'll take care of him, Cody. I'll take care of him...' He stops, looks up, dizzy, and we cut to a point-of-view shot of the warehouse. The image deliquesces, representing his mental collapse. Cut to a series of close shots of drilling machinery in operation. The score reaches a crescendo and he collapses.[183] Here again, mental images come at a point of crisis. Ma's resolution to go after Big Ed causes Cody acute anxiety. His recollection of Ma's declaration causes his panic attack.

[183] As with Oliverio's memory of Raquel's dismissal in *Subida al cielo*, Cody's recollection of Ma's words is not entirely accurate. Ma said, 'I'll take care of Big Ed,' but she did not say, 'I'll take care of him, Cody,' and yet in Cody's imagination, this phrase is repeated three times.

In the above examples the past appears as a nightmare which haunts the remembering subject. But where there is error, sin, guilt and regret, memory appears as a morbid fixation on the impossibility of altering the past; consciousness obsessively returns to past sins, recalled voices giving expression to guilty conscience.

Guilty conscience

In *Esta Noite Encarnarei no Teu Cadáver*, Coffin Joe remains aloof from the townspeople, who in turn avoid him, believing that he worships the devil. But despite all his sinister qualities, Joe is fond of children, since he believes their thoughts are as yet uncorrupted by religious superstition. He longs to make himself immortal through union with a carefully selected 'superior woman', and abducts six women for this purpose, four of whom he kills. As Jarinda, the last of these women, dies she puts a curse on Joe: he will never have a child; she will return to haunt him. Joe dismisses this as religious superstition. His equilibrium is threatened, however, when in the tavern he overhears Jarinda's husband telling friends that she was pregnant when she died. The widower shows his friends a photograph of Jarinda and Joe grabs it. The thought that he is responsible for the death of an unborn baby causes him great mental distress. As he looks at the photograph, Joe recalls Jarinda's curse: 'This night I'll possess your corpse!'

In *Jekyll and Hyde* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1931), when Dr Jekyll drinks his potion for the first time and becomes Mr Hyde, we enter a subjective sequence in which the room spirals around him at increasing velocity. As the spiralling camera movement becomes increasingly fast and his beastly panting and accelerated heartbeat become more and more prominent on the soundtrack, he recalls the comments of several

characters from earlier in the film: his fiancé, Muriel, urging him to marry her; Muriel's father, the general's, condemnation of Jekyll's haste to wed his daughter ('Positively indecent ... It isn't done!'); Jekyll's expression of frustration at the general's refusal ('I could strangle him!'); Champagne Ivy's invitation to him to 'come back soon', and the image of her coquettishly swinging leg; Lanion's chastisement of his behaviour toward Ivy ('Your conduct was disgusting!'); Jekyll's expression of his desire to physically possess Muriel ('Can a man dying of thirst forget water?'). Here the juxtaposition of memory fragments demonstrates an internal conflict: the voices of the general and Lanion express the weight of social pressure for Jekyll to act with appropriate decorum (repression); his recollection of his own utterances and that of Ivy represent an opposing force (libido). At this crucial moment in the film and in Jekyll's destiny, these remembrances give expression to his conflicting emotions. They are evidence of the state of acute dissatisfaction which has led him to this drastic action. The recalled utterances are an expression of Jekyll's awareness of the potential significance of this action, a manifestation of a subjectivity in crisis.

In Fritz Lang's films, representations of mental images often give expression to a guilty conscience. The criminal may escape legal justice, but he cannot escape his conscience. In *Fury* (1936), on the eve of his revenge against the lynch mob who attempted to burn him alive, Joe is haunted by the faces of the defendants and recalls the desperate sarcastic remarks of his fiancée as she pleaded with him not to carry out his planned revenge: 'Do a good job of it. What does it matter? Twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-five...?' While it seems these words appear involuntarily, overwhelming Joe, they are not yet auditory hallucinations. *Scarlet Street* (Fritz Lang, 1945) goes

further. After killing Kitty and allowing Johnny to take the blame, Chris overhears some journalists discussing Johnny's trial. One of them believes Johnny is innocent and expounds his theory that the real murderer will not get away with it: he will be haunted by his conscience. Chris dismisses this as nonsense, but after the execution he is plagued by the ghostly voices of Kitty and Johnny. Sometimes these voices repeat things which Chris actually heard Kitty and Johnny say, and at others he imagines the haunting imaginary utterances of their ghosts. Chris grants such credence to these voices that he responds to them aloud: 'No, no Kitty. It's him! You were innocent, you were pure...He's the murderer.' This torment drives him to attempt suicide. His neighbours sense something is wrong; when they break into his flat and Chris regains consciousness, Kitty's voice immediately returns to haunt him. Thus these voices seem to be auditory hallucinations: not only do recalled voices invade Chris's consciousness, but he believes in Kitty and Johnny's continued existence as ghosts. Chris knows that Kitty and Johnny are dead, and that the voices can only be imaginary, yet he is powerless to stop them, and seems to experience the voices *as if they were actually perceived*. First he pulls back the curtain, as though expecting that he might find a physical source for the imagined voices, and then, accepting their imaginary reality, he responds to them aloud.

Psychotic trauma

In *The Locket* (1947, John Brahm) Nancy Monks is a compulsive liar and thief of jewellery. Her lover, Norman Clyde, confronts her when he discovers that she has stolen a diamond bracelet from a party. Nancy claims that she has never stolen anything before, that she doesn't even like diamonds; she couldn't help herself. Clyde is not satisfied and presses her to delve into her past in search of an

explanation. Nancy recounts a childhood scene. She and her mother are living in the house of a rich family, for whom Nancy's mother works as a maid. Nancy befriends Karen Willis, the daughter of the family. During her birthday party, from which Nancy is excluded by Mrs Willis, Karen sneaks out and presents Nancy with a locket which she had received as a present. Alone, Nancy says, 'Thank you God, I won't ever ask you for anything again.' The next moment, however, Mrs Willis reclaims the locket from around Nancy's neck. Nancy is distraught, but her mother consoles her: 'If you want things badly enough, someday you'll have them.'

The following day the locket goes missing, and Mrs Willis interrogates Nancy. Meanwhile, Mrs Monks discovers the locket amongst Karen's clothes and presents it to Mrs Willis. But Mrs Willis rejects her explanation, insisting that she is protecting Nancy. Mrs Willis grabs Nancy by the arms and insistently shakes a desperate confession from her. Jerking herself free, Nancy accidentally knocks to the floor a cigarette case; a mechanical lullaby emits from the open case. Nancy stares down at the case as if transfixed. Clyde reassures Nancy, 'When you took the bracelet, you were just getting even with Mrs Willis.' But Nancy continues to steal and, after a shooting at a party, Clyde comes to suspect her of committing a murder of which a valet is accused. On the eve of the valet's execution, Clyde recounts his story to Nancy's husband, Dr Blair, pleading with him to intervene to prevent the execution. But Nancy convinces Blair that Clyde is bitterly jealous. Clyde subsequently commits suicide and when Blair later discovers that Clyde had been right, that Nancy is a thief, and perhaps a murderer, he suffers a nervous breakdown. Nancy's next fiancé is John Willis, son of her girlhood tormentor, Mrs Willis. Blair reappears on the eve of Nancy's wedding, to dissuade Willis from marrying her, but just as Blair

hadn't believed Clyde, so Willis doesn't believe Blair. Immediately before the ceremony, Mrs Willis presents Nancy with the locket which she took from her and then accused her of stealing as a child. Turim notes, '[t]his climatic scene of psychic dissolution is the reversal of the elements of Nancy's childhood flashback, with Nancy replacing the sister, marrying the brother, with the locket being given instead of taken away.'[184] Mrs Willis exits and Nancy recalls her exclamation of gratitude, when Karen had originally presented her with the locket: 'Thank you God. I won't ever ask you for anything again.' She acquiesces in a perplexed swoon, her unconscious quest for the locket of her childhood finally satisfied. 'Nancy,' a bridesmaid calls from offscreen. Startled from her rêverie, Nancy — once more — accidentally knocks the cigarette case off the dresser and the mechanical lullaby sounds. She stands, as if petrified, over the open box. The bridesmaid rushes in and closes the box, replacing it on the dresser, but the music continues.

'Did you close it tight?' asks Nancy. 'The tune ...'

'What tune?'

The bridesmaid leads Nancy into the hall where the guests are awaiting her and the wedding march is playing, but, intermingled with the music of the march, is the subjective sound of the mechanical lullaby. Visibly disquieted, Nancy descends the stairs, approaching the groom. Portentous nondiegetic music enters, the mechanical lullaby becomes increasingly intense, and Nancy is beset by recalled voices, her expression becoming increasingly distraught with each recalled utterance, until she finally relives the original traumatic scene with Mrs Willis:

'I'll get it out of you. I'll make you say it for the good of your soul.'

'No!'

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[184] Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film*, p.152

'Say it!'

'No!'

'Say it! Say it! Say it!'

Nancy screams and collapses. This appears to be a genuine portrayal of madness, in that throughout the film there are no lingering close-ups of Nancy which indicate that she is calculating. Rather, she seems to be genuinely ill, to actually believe in her lies, to believe that she is innocent of wrongdoing. Turim notes that in the final scene, Nancy 'collapses into madness',[185] but it seems this collapse is rather the apogee of Nancy's madness, the point from which she might at last begin to recover.

In this section we have considered the functions of recalled voices — which we felt it necessary to distinguish from other representations of memory simply on the basis of their formal characteristics. We now return to our general discussion of act of memory (visual-images as well as sound-images) to consider the various functions which these recollections perform (thus some of the basic functions of memory identified above are further elaborated in the next section). And here we will pursue further the hypothesis that there exists a relation between representations of mental images and themes of madness in cinema.

[185] *Ibid*., p.150

VI. (Act of Memory) Function

In distinguishing act of memory from flashback, we posit a distinction which many filmmakers and critics have not hitherto recognised. The formal criteria which we have outlined for the distinction have a general utility, but since in practice many factors problematise unequivocal distinctions, we find that many sequences fall into one category or the other quite arbitrarily, that in many cases there is little difference between the function of flashback-for-memory and act of memory. This section is organised such that the extent to which memory is a manifestation of madness is greater with each subsequent function identified. Thus, we commence with a consideration of the pragmatic functions of memory, which appear quite unrelated to any such themes.

Pragmatism and detection

The remembrance of a past incident often acts as a moment of revelation which will in some way affect or determine the future conduct of the remembering subject. Annette Kuhn writes,

> The past is like the scene of a crime: if the deed itself is unrecoverable, its traces may still remain. From these traces, markers that point towards a past presence, to something that has happened in this place, a (re)construction, if not a simulacrum, of the event can be pieced together. Memory work has a great deal in common with forms of inquiry which — like detective work and archaeology, say — involve working backwards — searching for clues,

> deciphering signs and traces, making deductions, patching together reconstructions out of fragments of evidence.[186]

The pragmatic use of memory is closely related to the practice of detection. Thus we find the pragmatic use of memory in subjects who are professional detectives, such as Bucky in *The Black Dahlia* (Brian De Palma, 2006). But it is not only professional detectives who use memory for pragmatic purposes. In many of Hitchcock's films the hero is an innocent man, a victim of circumstances, wrongly implicated in a crime, who must assume the role of detective. In *The Saboteur*, Kane is wrongly accused of an act of sabotage and flees, becoming a fugitive. The only connection between him and the guilty man, Fry, is an envelope that Kane picked up and returned to him when Fry dropped it at the military base. When the lorry driver asks Kane where he would like dropping, Kane recalls picking up the letters that Fry had dropped, visualising the address on the envelope: 'That's it, Deep Springs Ranch.' At the ranch he finds an elderly gentleman, Mr Tobin. While Tobin is inside the house, his infant grandson takes some letters out of his pocket and drops them. Superimposed over the envelopes on the ground are images of those dropped by Fry at the military base. The association between the memory image and the situation in the present establishes that Kane realises that he may find some clue to assist him in his pursuit of Fry amongst the letters on the floor.

In *Vertigo* Scotty's detective work is quite different. Scotty does not aim to prove his innocence (though his reputation is tarnished by the incident at the bell tower in which

[186] Kuhn (1999) from *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*, in Rossington, M & A. Whitehead (eds) (2007) *Theories of Memory*, p.232

he failed to prevent Madeleine from committing suicide, he was not found guilty of any crime); rather, he is in search of the truth: why does Judy bear such an uncanny resemblance to Madeleine? When Scotty finally completes the process of making over Judy to look like Madeleine we have one of Hitchcock's supreme expressionist moments. As they kiss, the camera spirals round them. The lights give way to darkness; the *mise-en-scène* undergoes a metamorphosis so that it appears that they are kissing in the stable at the bell-tower, symbolically expressing Scotty's remembrance of his kiss there with Madeleine. As Scotty realises this he breaks off for a moment, and then resumes kissing her. Gradually the stable background recedes; as the camera continues to rotate, the *mise-en-scène* becomes that of the hotel room at the Empire once more. One can interpret this elaborate sequence — the 360-degree camera movement, the shifting colour sequence, shifting *mise-en-scène* — as a visual actualisation of Scotty's realisation that Judy is Madeleine.[187] It is not enough simply to say that these are mental images; the shifting scenes are an objectification of the experience of memory, of the process by which uncanny suspicion and incredulity (Judy resembles Madeleine, but Madeleine is dead) become belief (Judy *is Madeleine — Madeleine is not dead*). Immediately subsequent to this sequence, Scotty's suspicions are confirmed when he helps Judy to put on her necklace and realises that it is the same locket which belonged to Carlotta Valdez. For a moment the locket around Judy's neck becomes that in the portrait, establishing that Scotty has made this connection.

In *Spellbound*, detection takes the form of a psychoanalytic investigation. In order to prove John Ballantyne, the Peck character's, innocence, Connie must first help him to

[187] See Cavell's discussion of this sequence in *The World Viewed*, pp.202-3

identify, and then to confront, the repressed traumatic episode of his past. Only this will explain his unaccountable sense of guilt, which is such that, though he has no memory of it, he is willing to accept responsibility for a murder (of which Connie is convinced he is innocent). Throughout the film, various motifs in the present prompt, for Ballantyne, a string of remembrances, each of which is followed by a dizzy spell. But the film withholds the content of these vague remembrances which so affect him. Through an examination of the prompts, Connie helps him to piece together the clues, and finally her investigation leads them to a ski slope, the site of the climactic scene in his psychoanalytic therapy. Descending the slope, Ballantyne recalls descending the slope of a balustrade and accidentally killing his brother by pushing him onto a spike on an iron railing. This is the original trauma which has been the source of his perpetual unconscious sense of guilt. The only mental images in the film (other than the dream sequence) present the revelation of the repressed scene; the painful confrontation of a repressed trauma, this moment in fact constitutes a fundamental experience in the overcoming of his neurosis, a moment of supreme clarity. Here Ballantyne's illness is amnesia, an absence of memory; when memory images finally arrive they have a rejuvenating effect.

In contrast to Hitchcock's innocent men who inadvertently become caught up in espionage and murder plots, in *Blue Velvet*, Jeffrey aspires to be a detective. On his way to see Detective Williams, he is startled to see a man he recognises from his surveillance of Frank's building, the Yellowman. He notices the name — Detective Gordon — on the door and this prompts him to recall Frank's conversation with Ben about Gordon. As we have seen, this memory prompts a further memory which enables Jeffrey to identify the Yellowman as Detective Gordon. Later, upon exiting

Dorothy's apartment, in which he has discovered two corpses, Jeffrey sees the well-dressed man entering the building. He sits down on the stair and recalls an image of the well-dressed man meeting Gordon. We return to Jeffrey on the stairs and he recalls a previous image of the well-dressed man and the Yellowman/Gordon exiting the car. This association of images acts as a revelation: there was no third man: the well-dressed man is Frank, and he is on his way upstairs.

In *Pursued*, as in *Spellbound*, the investigation is biographical. Jeb assumes the role of detective, investigating his own past. We have seen that he is haunted by a violent incident in his past which resulted in the death of both of his parents. And since that night, for some unknown reason, a one-armed stranger, Grant Callum, has wanted him dead. At the start of the film at the dilapidated ranch Jeb looks out through a doorway and the limpid apparition of a man appears, and says,

> 'Come out, or we'll come in after you.'
>
> 'You're imagining it', Thelma reassures him.
>
> 'I'm not imagining. I'm remembering. I'm putting together what happened, or what I guess must have happened.'

Jeb's paltry memories of the fateful night have become commingled with dream images. All he remembers are fragments — flashes, boots with spurs. As a child, Jeb is haunted by involuntary memories of the episode; while the memory-images are impoverished, it is plain that they conceal a dark secret. With time these memory fragments become clues, images which Jeb clings to in the hope that through them he might uncover the mystery of his past. When he is wounded in battle and wakes from a nightmare in hospital, the army doctor tells him of his 'fever chatter', which

> ‘seemed to come from way back somewhere when you were a kid...Something about boots, flashes of light, somebody hurt, killed.’
>
> ‘You’ve got to tell me what I said, Doc.,’ Jeb insists, ‘every word, I wanna know.’

Thus Jeb, too, is a detective; he must unearth the buried taboo of his past if he is to come to terms with his identity. At the end of the film, Callum and his posse hunt Jeb down at the old derelict ranch. Hitherto, Jeb’s excavations of memory have yielded nothing but the same half-remembered fragments, but here, aware that Callum is on his way, Jeb anticipates a re-enactment of the bloody events of his forgotten past. He senses that re-living the violent threat will engender memories which will illuminate the obscure secret which has haunted him; he fatalistically desires this and, by returning to the ranch, has engineered it thus. As they surround the ranch, Jeb shoots out at Callum and his posse. They return fire and as the shots reign in, Jeb is overwhelmed by memories (‘I remember now, those dreams I’ve been having ever since I was a kid ...’) Realising these memories enables Jeb to piece together the clues of memory fragments which have so obsessed him (‘The flashes were gunfire. And the man shooting was my father ... The boots with spurs — they were my father’s.’)

We see, then, that the pragmatic use of memory can be of fundamental personal significance for the remembering subject. Such is the case with Laura Palmer’s volitional memory in *Fire Walk With Me*. In a moment of intense solitary reflection, Laura realises that the ring the One Armed Man was wearing on the finger with which he pointed so furiously at her father in their confrontation at the junction, belonged to her deceased friend Teresa Banks. Here she recalls and draws a connection between two separate pasts: the incident with the One Armed Man in the recent past; and an

earlier past — the meeting organised by Teresa in which Laura and Ronette were to service Teresa's client, who (unknown to all three women) was in fact Laura's father, Leland. Inserted in between these two pasts is an image of the Man From Another Place, wearing the ring in Laura's dream.[188] Thus, through this willed use of memory, Laura takes important, though painful steps toward the horrific revelation that her father is sexually abusing her and that it was he who murdered her friend Teresa. This is a courageous use of memory, which contributes to the gradual rending of a veil of denial which Laura has sustained since childhood.

Revelation

The narrative of some films prepares in advance for a crucial revelatory recollection. Near the beginning of *New Jack City* (Mario Van Peebles, 1991), undercover police officer, Scotty, apprehends crack cocaine addict, Pookie. When onlookers start to grab the money which is scattered around them on the floor, Scotty produces his gun and points it at the crowd, cautioning, 'Get back, I'm a police officer.' The shots of the reacting onlookers focus particularly on a well-dressed man, who, like everyone else, watches with interest. Subsequently we learn that this well-dressed onlooker is Karim, a respected businessman, who is a close associate of drug lord Nino Brown. Later, masquerading as a drug supplier, Scotty becomes acquainted with one of Nino's associates. When he appears at the court where Nino and his friends are playing basketball, Nino orders him to leave, since he does not know him personally. As Scotty leaves, Karim remarks, 'I've seen that boy somewhere before.'

[188] As in the above examples from *Blue Velvet*, Lynch's presentation of memory here emphasises thought associations by which discrete memory-images form chains of association.

Eager to conclude their operation, the police engineer a drug deal. Meeting with Nino and his cortège in a warehouse, Scotty lays his suitcase on the ground and as he carefully opens it, Karim recalls the scene from the start of the film in which Scotty apprehended Pookie. (It seems the visual resemblance in Scotty's physical attitude is the immediate prompt for the memory — in the remembered scene he kneels over Pookie, surrounded by scattered money; in the present again he kneels as he opens the suitcase.) This memory, the only mental image in the entire film, is of great significance (because the drug deal is thwarted, the police cannot secure the lengthy conviction they had hoped for), and though it occurs towards the end of the film, it has, as we have seen, been prepared for in advance from the beginning.

A note on form and function

In considering the various functions of act of memory we must here return to Bordwell's distinction between *story* and *plot*. The story represents the gamut of narrative events in chronological sequence. The plot is the order in which the story is told. In his discussion of flashback, Bordwell distinguishes between *internal* flashbacks, which present story events which are subsequent to the first plot event, and *external* flashbacks, which present story events which precede the first plot event. The cases discussed above, in which memory performs a pragmatic function, are typically internal recollections. But internal recollections do not necessarily repeat material already presented. Hitchcock effectively employs internal recollections which return to crucial narrative events, the original presentation of which was obscured. In *Frenzy* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1972), when the killer, Rusk, recalls the moment his victim tore the brooch from his tie, the memory presents fragmentary images of a scene which was earlier subject to an accentuated narrative ellipse (at the

moment of the woman's murder, the camera withdrew out onto the street). In *Vertigo*, the crucial episode on the bell tower (an incident which was previously presented from Scotty's — limited — perspective) is revealed through Judy's recollection.

Subjective insight

Recollections which offer subjective insight are typically, though not always external. Unlike pragmatic recollections — by which the subject engenders a knowledge hitherto lacking, and which often have a more or less immediate pragmatic value — memories which offer subjective insight often reveal a significant episode in the subject's past which sheds light on his or her motivation, habitual behaviour and actions. Such recollections are of little immediate value for the remembering subject; rather, these memories are a convenient narrational device by which we are granted access to characters' motivations and obsessions.

We have established that a minority of recollections which offer subjective insight are internal. In *Vertigo*, the internal recollection performs an integral narrative function in revealing to the spectator Judy's deception. In other films recollections return to earlier story events which were not previously elided or obscured. In *Passage to India* (David Lean, 1984) Adela goes exploring on her bicycle and comes across statues of figures in erotic poses. The mysterious intrigue which the statues represent for her is a microcosm of the mythology of the dark, sensual mysteries of the Orient to which she is attracted. Her rêverie is abruptly curtailed when the wild monkeys inhabiting the overgrown area violently chase her away. The symbolic significance is stark: 'yes, "the exotic" may seem attractive and mysterious, but beware! Don't get

too close; let this be a warning to you!' Nevertheless, when lying in bed Adela subsequently recalls the sculptures, it is clear that she is seeking some kind of awakening, knowledge of the Other, and that she is tempted by the thought of a romance with an Indian, which for her represents an attractive contrast to the dreary prospect of a future with her fiancé. This subjective insight presages the film's central action. Adela's recollection of the erotic statues is not unlike Max's recalled voices in *Videodrome*; it marks the progression from curiosity to obsession. Just as, in *Videodrome*, a television programme which features real-life torture and mutilation represents a taboo object, so for the colonial English of *Passage to India*, lower-caste native Indians represent a taboo love object.

Adela's recollection in *Passage to India* is internal, but, as suggested above, the majority of recollections which offer subjective insight are external. In *The Thin Red Line* (Terrence Malick, 1998), Private Bell has very little dialogue in the film; his character is constructed predominantly through memory images of his wife. Two-thirds of the way through the film, when his wife writes him declaring she wants a divorce, we are party to his distress, which he confides to no one. Thus an entire ongoing plot line is developed with barely a line of dialogue uttered.

A recollection may reveal the motive for a mode of conduct that is atypical in terms of generic expectations or in the context of the director's oeuvre or the actor's star persona. In *The Quiet Man*, Squire, the brother of his fiancée, challenges Thornton to a fight in public. Despite all Squire's provocations, Thornton refuses to fight. Given that Thornton is played by John Wayne, this refusal to fight seems inexplicable. But he appears to be fighting an internal battle, struggling to check his natural instincts; it

seems he would relish the opportunity to fight Squire, but some unspecified motive prevents him. Later, when Squire knocks him unconscious, a recollection emerges which reveals that Thornton was formerly a professional boxer and killed an opponent in the ring. In this brief sequence Thornton's behaviour — unmanly in Ford's world — is instantly elucidated.

In other cases the memory may imply a psychological or psychoanalytic explanation for a personality disorder or perversion. In *Belle de Jour*, on her way up the stairs to the brothel for the first time, Séverine recalls when, as a girl, she rejected the wafer when the priest offered it in Communion. Prior narrative events established that Séverine harbours masochistic sexual fantasies and is intrigued by the notion of prostitution and the brothel. This recollection establishes an association between Séverine's imminent entrance into a life as a prostitute and a childhood incident, which now appears as a portent of her present action.

Spider (David Cronenberg, 2002) offers a portrayal of a man who has been institutionalised in prison after a serious crime in his youth. The adult Spider relives scenes from the past, some of which he remembers, others at which he was not present, but imagines. In this way Cronenberg establishes sympathy for Spider, since through these memories and imaginings we learn how he attempted to kill his father and his father's mistress in revenge for the murder of his mother. The mental images thus initially appear to perform a therapeutic function: through them Spider relives/re-creates the events surrounding his mother's death, in order that he might achieve catharsis. But this understanding is undermined when, at the end of the film, we learn that it was Spider — and not his father — who killed his mother. We must now

revise our understanding of the mental images which have throughout the film established sympathy for Spider: in the light of this new knowledge, these episodes appear as the imaginings of a very disturbed mind. By presenting Spider — through his subjective remembrances and imaginings — as an unfortunate victim, only to finally discredit his version of events — revealing it to be the elaborate fantasy of a deranged mind — the film betrays a reactionary agenda, whereby Spider is condemned more vehemently *because* of this insight into his warped imagination.

Moment of death

In cinema the moment of death sometimes provides the occasion for a representation of imagination. The climactic sequence of *Don't Look Now* (Nicolas Roeg, 1973) offers a compelling example of this — though the images that John experiences do not cover the whole period of his life, but only significant images and impressions from earlier in the film. The sequence unfolds in fast-pace montage. The juxtaposition of images from various points in the recent (and more distant) past, the desultory character of their succession (the memories do not unfold in chronological sequence, but rather jump back and forth between different pasts), effectively conveys the faculty of memory in its externality to time and chronology. This sequence seems to owe something to the representations of memory found in French Impressionist films of the twenties which, Turim notes, 'intersperse multiple temporalities as co-present to human consciousness.'[189]

In *Hunger* (Steve McQueen, 2008), the moment of the leader of the IRA prisoners' 1980 hunger strike, Bobby Sands's, death takes a quite different form — an elegiac,

[189] *Flashbacks in Film*, p.79

lyrical sequence. Close to death, Sands wakes and with some difficulty identifies the woman at his bedside as his mother. With this there is an extremely slow dissolve to a subjective sequence. A group of schoolboys cross-country run in a cornfield. Now the young Sands gazes out of the window of a moving coach. The singing — 'We're from Belfast' — of the other boys is gradually replaced by ambient sound design and we cut to the young Sands running through the woods alone. As he comes to a standstill we return to the present, the camera looking directly down upon the emaciated Sands. The sound of his accelerated breathing is prominent here, and it is apparent that he is dying. Catching his breath, the young Sands turns to look behind him, but there are no other runners in sight; he is way out ahead. At the dying Sands's bedside, his mother raises her hand to his head. Still without sign of the other boys, the young Sands, having caught his breath, faces forward and resumes running. Shots of a flock of birds flying away and a blue sky as evening falls are a figure for Sands' passing away. Here McQueen uses this subjective sequence to present an elegy to Sands's role in the hunger strikes. Rather than depicting an actual memory, the primary significance of the sequence is poetic. True, the sequence emerges as a recollection. But this motivation is a means to a greater end, an effective metaphor, establishing an associative continuity between character traits of the young Sands — a cross-country runner, way out in front ahead of the field — and of the adult Sands — a political activist, inspiring men by his example. In the woods the young Sands, so far ahead no one will see him, stops to catch his breath, and, certain that the other boys are close behind him, faces forward and resumes running. The adult Sands is also way out ahead, leading men who he knows are following behind him. At the threshold of his mortal life, he pauses, looks back, and with courage confronts death. By combining the moment of death with these lyrical memory images, McQueen

urges us to understand the cross-country race as a figure for the Irish prisoners' struggle; Sands's death is a victory for the struggle of the Republican prisoners.

Guilty conscience

We will see in Part II that representations of imagination frequently give expression to a guilty conscience; acts of memory occasionally perform this function also. In *Blue Velvet*, the morning after being beaten up by Frank, Jeffrey reflects on recent events. We cut between Jeffrey sitting on his bed in the present, the camera zooming in closer as he breaks down in tears, and a series of mental images, which juxtapose images of Dorothy begging Jeffrey to hit her (which he does, and she smiles with pleasure), with the maternal image of Dorothy as she is granted momentary access to her son at Ben's house. As he experiences these images, Jeffrey breaks down in tears, thus establishing his sense of guilt at his complicity in Dorothy's sexual masochism.

We noted earlier how in *Esta Noite Encarnarei no Teu Cadáver*, when Joe learns that Jarinda, one of the women he has killed, was pregnant, he is haunted by the curse she uttered as she died ('This Night I'll Possess Your Corpse'). Simultaneous with his recollection of her curse, the photograph of Jarinda becomes an imaginary/memory image of Jarinda as she died, a snake wrapped around her body. Thus here recollection expresses a sense of terror. Joe's struggle with guilt escalates when he subsequently loses his own child and images of Jarinda return to haunt him. Thus Joe finds his imperious assuredness threatened when circumstances force him to question his philosophy and consider the veracity of the religious superstition for which he has had such contempt. In representing Joe's lacerating sense of doubt, mental images here signify madness.

Pathological

As is clear from the above discussion of guilty conscience, act of memory is often related to crime and sin. A character has committed some crime or other for which she feels guilt; she is plagued by her conscience, a repentant sinner. Others are less or even un-repentant. For these characters, memory of sin is more often a consequence of contingent accidents than pangs of guilt.

The 'Merry Widow' waltz acts as a sinister refrain which runs throughout *Shadow of a Doubt* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1943). The song first plays over the opening credit sequence of images of ballroom waltz dancing. When Uncle Charlie later gives a present of a ring to his niece (also called Charlie) and she notices that it has an engraving which has nothing to do with her, it is clear that the ring is stolen; with this the 'Merry Widow' emerges on the soundtrack and extradiegetic images of ballroom dancing are superimposed upon images of Uncle Charlie in the present. This is an interesting enunciation which is not clearly designated as act of memory, and could equally be interpreted as an autonomous act of narration. This moment reveals the specific nature of Uncle Charlie's criminality for the first time: until this point it is clear that he is on the run and that he is almost certainly a criminal; the engraving on the ring suggests that it was stolen; now the significance of the ballroom waltz of the opening credit sequence is apparent: Uncle Charlie charms and then steals from rich, elderly women. It seems that Uncle Charlie's imagining of, or his remembrance of the 'Merry Widow' waltz signifies his remembrance of his crimes. But if this is so, it is significant that he remains unperturbed by this association.

In *Jekyll and Hyde*, Dr Jekyll goes to the aid of a young working-class woman, Champagne-Ivy, who is being attacked. As he puts her to bed and attends to her wounds she flirts with him and finally grabs and kisses him. Jekyll's colleague, Lanion, enters and is horrified at what he witnesses. Jekyll laughs the incident off and leaves. On his way out Ivy encourages him to return and swings her leg seductively. As he and Lanion leave the building Jekyll recalls Ivy's words: 'Come back soon, won't you ... Oh yes you can. Soon...' For some moments, the image of Ivy's exposed leg, swinging over the side of the bed, is superimposed over the scene outside as Lanion chastises Jekyll for his unprofessional conduct. The superimposition seems to be a figurative expression of the processes of Jekyll's unconscious mind, his repressed libido. This is supported by the ensuing dialogue as Jekyll says to his colleague, 'Well, why aren't you frank enough to admit that other self, that indecent self? No, you prefer to hide it and pretend it isn't there.' Here, then, quite the opposite of imagination appearing in the form of guilty conscience, the film presents images which signify temptation. It finally seems that Champagne Ivy's invitation, and the lingering image of her coquettishly swinging leg, unconsciously propel Jekyll to test his potion. After the transformation, Hyde immediately seeks out Ivy.

Dr Jekyll represents the model for a character type, the pathological male who struggles with the beast within. *Twin Peaks*'s Leland Palmer is an embodiment of the same basic character type: a respectable member of the community who leads a clandestine existence in which he becomes a lecherous beast, giving free reign to repressed impulses. In *Fire Walk With Me*, as we have seen, when Leland arrives home and sees Laura sitting with her best friend, Donna, he recalls a memory of her in a similar posture, when he glanced into the trailer window to see Laura and Ronette

Polanski, Teresa's friends. During the recollection the placid music momentarily gives way to a dark underscore cue, and then returns as the memory passes. The memory, thus punctuated by the score, is marked as the sinister content of Leland's mind. Later, after a harrowing encounter on the road with the One Armed Man, Leland has two recollections in close succession. First he recalls the moment when, in bed with Teresa, he frightened her by covering her eyes with his hands. The ensuing conversation runs as follows:

> 'What are you doing?'
>
> 'Who am I?'
>
> 'I don't know.'
>
> 'That's right.'

When Laura calls him in the present, and Leland (impossibly) seems to react to her voice in the past, the eerie, dream-like unsettling effect is compounded by the fact that the specific wording of Leland and Teresa's conversation has a deeper significance with regard to Laura and her denial of Leland's abuse: the words encapsulate the unarticulated dialogue between Laura and Leland, abused and abuser: 'What are you doing? — Who am I? — I don't know.' In the present, Laura asks Leland who the man was, but Leland ignores her, preoccupied. Now a second recollection emerges: in a memory which expands on a previous memory-image, Leland recalls arriving at the trailer park to meet Teresa's friends and catching a glimpse through the window of Laura and Ronette, before hurriedly leaving. Here Leland's recollection imparts crucial narrative information: when we return to the present we know exactly why Leland killed Teresa Banks. The coincidence between recollection duration and time elapsed in the present, the sense of memory experienced in time is intense and palpable here. During these recollections *something happens* in the present — Leland

betrays himself: after each recollection Laura seems to know a little more, has become more suspicious. (After the first recollection, referring to the One Armed Man and his tirade at the junction, Laura asks: 'Who was that? He looked familiar. Have I met him?'; after the second, she asks whether Leland came home during the day last week — when she discovered Bob in her bedroom. Leland lies; he says no, and then quickly changes his mind. Laura is now markedly troubled and suspicious; we sense the vast veil of denial being rent asunder.) Later, as Leland paces up and down alone in the living room he recalls murdering Teresa. The memory reprises the murder scene from the film's opening: before, chillingly, we heard the murder; now we see it also. The emergence of Leland's memories, the manner in which they are prompted, is essentially ordinary; what is abnormal is the content of the memories. There is no suggestion of remorse or feelings of guilt — he simply remembers murdering Teresa. These mental images provide access to a pathological mind.

Conclusion to Part I

Our discussion of flashback established that current terminology is inadequate. Flashback-for-narrative seemed to us to be quite distinct from the mental images of memory. On the other hand, flashback-for-memory appeared to imply mental images, since it is motivated by an act of recollection. Nevertheless, a closer examination revealed that this emphasis on memory is superficial. Flashback-for-memory conceals a shift of emphasis from subjective memory to autonomous narration. Thus we distinguished act of memory from flashback-for-memory, asserting that act of memory consists of representations of mental images. While, like flashback, act of memory may retain a certain objectivity in presenting events remembered from an objective perspective (the remembering subject is often physically present in the memory image), unlike flashback-for-memory, the typical presentation of act of memory (intercutting) places emphasis on the experience of memory in time.

In its present usage the term 'flashback' is too ductile to mean anything other than 'a filmic depiction of anteriority'. However, film narrative theory has established some qualifying adjectives which provide greater specificity. Bordwell's distinction between 'internal' and 'external' flashbacks is important. (My own distinction between flashback and act of memory means that we can speak also of internal and external acts of memory.) Branigan's distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' flashbacks is less significant. Subjective flashbacks are logically motivated, either through a character narrating a story, or through memory; objective flashbacks emerge autonomously. There are very few objective flashbacks in classical cinema. Such flashbacks are far more frequent in modern cinema, though still relatively rare (in relation to the volume of subjective flashbacks). The vast majority of cinema's

flashbacks are subjective. But to identify a sequence as a 'subjective flashback' tells us very little. Was it motivated by an act of narration? If so, was this narrative actually recounted by one character to another, or was it recounted only in the imagination of the recounting subject, addressed to herself/the spectator? Or was it motivated by an act of recollection? If so, was it presented as an actual memory, experienced in time, or a mere analogue of memory?

My concept of act of memory is a move towards great specificity in speaking of cinema's representations of anteriority. Current terminology is deeply inadequate. Is it practical or desirable that the term 'flashback' should apply equally to the lacerating flash-inserts of *The Pawnbroker*, as it does to the long recounted narratives of *Out of the Past* or *Citizen Kane*? In its current use the term is conveniently ductile. We need qualifying adjectives to distinguish between different varieties of filmic depictions of anteriority. This terminology does not currently exist and so it must be developed. My 'act of memory' is a move in this direction. A phenomenological approach to film form, it introduces the question of ontological specificity into our efforts to distinguish between different varieties of filmic representations of anteriority.

So far we have examined representations of the past. In Part II we consider representations of imagination, that is, the imagined past, present and future.

PART II - IMAGINATION

Introduction to Part II

In Chapter 3 we look at cognitive and phenomenological theories of the image, before proceeding to consider questions of form and function in filmic representations of imagination and the situations which engender imaginings. Here we develop our hypothesis about the relation between representations of mental images and themes of madness, and this theme will be further developed throughout Part II. In positing a connection between mental images and madness, we anticipate the objection that imagination is an essential function of ordinary human mental activity. The capacity to remember, and to create and test imaginary hypotheses, are mental capacities that human beings have developed over time and which distinguish humans from animals. We accept this. The essential point is that madness manifests itself through material (the brain), mental processes (various forms of reasoning and speculating, etc.) and behavioural and psychological tendencies (anxiety, fantasy, conscience) which are common to all humans. Mental images and themes of madness are so closely bound up in cinema that it seems the history of cinema's representations of mental images is best understood in the context of its representations of madness. Our efforts to demonstrate this will require us to consider just what constitutes madness; we may begin to understand certain mental images experienced by characters, who would not normally be designated mad, as traces of madness; we will consider the possibility and extent of continuity between the behaviour of ordinary characters who, in difficult circumstances, summon, or are prey to mental images, and the insane character who has lost control over the images that occur to her.

Before proceeding further we will first briefly consider Richardson's cognitive theory of mental imagery.

Chapter 3. Imagination

I. Richardson's cognitive theory of mental imagery

Richardson organises mental imagery in a typology consisting of four elements: 1. after-imagery; 2. eidetic imagery; 3. memory imagery; 4. imagination imagery. At the outset he writes, '[i]t may well prove to be the case that a quasi-perceptual experience, in the form of a visual image, involves the reactivation of those neuro-physiological processes of the central nervous system that were activated during the original perceptual experience.'[190] Later he writes '[a]n image by definition is a quasi-sensory or quasi-perceptual experience.' But in the following sentence he qualifies this, adding, '[i]ts meaning and significance derive from its differentiation from a percept.'[191] In most cases the cortex plays an important role in the generation of images.

Imagination imagery is the broadest class of mental imagery, encompassing hypnagogic imagery, perceptual isolation imagery, hallucinogenic drug imagery, and photic stimulation imagery. From his analysis of the work of a number of researchers Richardson notes that '[t]he main difference between these forms of imagery is in the antecedent conditions that arouse them and not in the phenomenal attributes that appear in the subject's report.'[192] All cases of imagination imagery, Richardson stresses, involve a diminishing of sensory processes.[193]

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[190] Richardson, A. (1969) *Mental Imagery*, p.3

[191] *Ibid.*, p.142

[192] *Ibid.*, p.93

[193] *Ibid.*, pp.119-20

This brief discussion has provided us with an initial idea of the different forms of mental imagery, but we must forbear from granting the findings of cognitive research too much weight because the specific test conditions under which its results are obtained are evidently quite different from the environments and conditions in which mental images are otherwise spontaneously experienced. We will reserve Richardson's discussion of hallucination for Chapter 7. In a brief excursus we will now discuss the image as a phenomenon of consciousness. In his earliest theoretical writings, Jean-Paul Sartre elaborated a phenomenological theory of the image which will inform our discussion throughout Part II.

II. Sartre's phenomenology of the image

In *L'Imaginaire* (1940) Sartre identifies the common error of all preceding theories of imagination as 'the illusion of imminence', the confounding of images with things. Sartre maintains that the imaginary world, like the real world, is a world that exists, only it exists in the imaginary mode. The image, he writes, 'is an undoubted psychic reality. An image can in no way be reduced to a sensory content, or be constituted on the ground of a sensory content.'[194] Indeed, the purely mental image can be constituted only by the annihilation of perceptual consciousness: '[a]s long as I *look* at this table, I cannot form an image of Pierre; but if all at once the irreal Pierre surges up before me, the table that is under my eyes vanishes'.[195] The relevance of this last to cinema's representations of mental images may be grasped if we consider the function of the dissolve, which often heralds (the emergence of and/or from) a sequence of mental images: as the present recedes, mental images emerge, and vice versa.

[194] *Imagination: A Psychological Critique*, p.125

[195] *L'Imaginaire*, p.120, Sartre's emphasis

The positional quality designates whether the object which the image represents exists or not. A condition of the image is negation: the positional act which constitutes the image 'can posit the object as nonexistent, or as absent, or as existing elsewhere, it can also "neutralise" itself, which is to say not posit its object as existent.'[196] The imaginary world is not in fact characterised by freedom: the image is constituted by the nihilation of the world 'as totality', 'and this nihilation is revealed to us as being the inverse of the very freedom of consciousness'[197]; the world is denied from the point of view which posits the object imagined as absent or nonexistent, or — to confirm the precise significance of this point for us — the world is denied from the perspective of the 'present'. Thus the emergence of the imaginary world coincides with the retreat of the present.

> if consciousness is free, the noematic correlate of its freedom should be the *world* that carries in itself its possibility of negation, at each moment and from each point of view, by means of an image, even while the image must as yet be constituted by a particular intention of consciousness.[198]

A consciousness which is free is able at each moment to deny or negate the world from a specific point of view by the creation of an image; the specific point of view from which the world is denied is that from which the image of an absent or non-existent object is present to consciousness. This definition of the freedom of consciousness seems to correspond with a normal use of imagination. In

[196] *Ibid*., p.12

[197] *Ibid*., p.184

[198] *Ibid*., p.185

L'Imaginaire Sartre applies his phenomenological method in a discussion of the different states of consciousness corresponding to various states of imagination, ultimately developing a 'pathology of imagination', a phenomenological analysis of various states of neuroses. We often find representations of mental images that correspond to Sartre's theory of the image, thus in our discussion we will return to Sartre's theories wherever they are relevant to our understanding of cinema's representations of mental images.

III. Form

In the following chapters we discuss the largest classes of imagination — imagined voices, fantasy, dream, and hallucination — separately. In this chapter, we will consider imagination in a more general sense.

The imagination circuit

Just as in cinema there is a memory-circuit, so there is an imagination circuit, in which mental images are framed by opening and closing parenthetic shots of the imagining subject in the present. This resolved circuit of classical cinema is often dismantled in modern cinema, in which one or other, or both, of the opening and closing parenthetic shots are omitted.

Entering imagination

The omission of the opening parenthetic shot often deceives the spectator into (temporarily) mistaking an imaginary scenario for reality. In *Ai No Corrida* (Nagisa Oshima, 1976), a servant, Sada, enters into a sexual relationship with her master, Kichizo, and soon becomes jealous of his wife. She approaches Kichizo's room while

his wife is shaving him and the wife sends her to fetch a bowl of water. Upon returning, Sada drops the water when she finds Kichizo and his wife making love. Frozen in a bewildered attitude of fury and jealousy, she notices the cut-throat razor lying redundant on the floor nearby. From a close-up of Sada we cut to her picking up the razor. Cut to the wife rising into the shot with blood pouring from her face, her ear severed from her head. It is only as we return to a medium shot of Sada, still frozen at the threshold, and then to her view of Kichizo, still making love to his wife, that we recognise that the previous few shots — her murder of Kichizo's wife — were mental images of Sada's imagination. Sequences such as this draw attention to a breakdown in the signifying chain. In this connection Frederic Jameson discusses Lacan's account of schizophrenia:

> Lacan describes schizophrenia as a breakdown in the signifying chain, that is, the interlocking syntagmatic series of signifiers which constitutes an utterance or a meaning [...] His conception of the signifying chain essentially presupposes one of the basic principles (and one of the great discoveries) of Saussurian structuralism, namely, the proposition that meaning is not a one-to-one relationship between signifier and signified, between the materiality of language, between a word or a name, and its referent or concept. Meaning on the new view is generated by the movement from signifier to signifier. What we generally call the signified — the meaning-effect, as that objective mirage of signification generated and projected by the relationship of signifiers among themselves. When that relationship breaks down, when the links of signifying

> chain snap, then we have schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers.[199]

The recollection circuit and the imagination circuit are signifying chains. The meaning of a sequence is not imminent to its images but arises from the relationship of the images to each other. Where the signifying chain breaks down or is dismantled — as in the above example from *Ai No Corrida*, where the opening parenthetic shot of the circuit is omitted — the text, in a sense, assumes a schizophrenic quality: do the images represent the reality of the present or imagination? The closing shots of the circuit resolve the tension, establishing the correct interpretation of the preceding shots.

Exiting imagination

The omission of the closing parenthetic shot means that the imagined scene acts as a transition between presents. In *8 ½* Guido is eating breakfast with his wife when his mistress appears. Guido escapes this impossible situation, in which it seems a confrontation between the two women is inevitable, by conjuring a fantasy. Upon exiting the fantasy, rather than returning to the original present, we shift to the new present of the theatre where Guido is casting his film.[200] In *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980) the telepathic hotel cook, Mr Halloran, has an ominous vision of the troubling happenings at the hotel. We see an image of the open door of room 237 (the room Halloran explicitly forbade Danny from entering), then a shot of Danny in a

[199] Jameson, F. (1991) *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham: Duke University Press., pp.25-26.

[200] This case is particularly interesting since in the theatre the scriptwriter immediately offers Guido his criticism of the 'Saraghina episode'. Thus what commenced as Guido's fantasy, the movement out of the sequence now suggests is the scriptwriter's imagination of a scene from Guido's script.

catatonic state. But when Jack comes to investigate and encounters the beautiful woman in the bathtub, this is no longer Halloran's vision but narration proper; the resolving shot is omitted. Since, upon emerging from imagination, we can shift — as in *8 ½* — to a new present, here one might argue that we do not emerge from imagination at all, since the images of Halloran's imagination are presented as actually occurring; Halloran is telepathic — thus his mental images *already* represent a new present.

Alternatives to the imagination circuit

In Part I we noted that one alternative to the usual cross-cutting of act of memory was Hitchcock's superimpositions, as in the *Saboteur* and *The 39 Steps*, to depict the remembering subject and the memory-image simultaneously. *Suspicion* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1941) employs the same device to represent Lina's imagining of Johnny pushing Beaky from a cliff while simultaneously showing her expression as she realises this dreadful vision. In *Blow Out* (Brian De Palma, 1981), De Palma presents different temporal and existential planes simultaneously, using a layering effect. Having inadvertently recorded the senator's accident, Jack listens to the audio recording in order to discover precisely what happened. While he listens to the crucial moment of the recording his face remains in close-up (in the present), while in the background is a close-up of the tyre being shot in slow-motion. Jack did not see this: this is not memory but an act of imagination based on the evidence of his audio recording.

Asynchrony

Modern cinema often presents mental images asynchronously, thus capturing the phenomenological subjective experience of the co-existence of two temporal or existential planes: remembering/imagining while remaining in the present — not only physically, but (on some level) consciously, or sensorially. In such cases mental images are usually presented on the sound track, the image remaining in the present. There is thus a rupture which corresponds to an apparent ontological hierarchy of the senses, whereby hearing represents the subjective, vision the objective.[201] We find such asynchrony in *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski, 2002), as the pianist, sitting before a piano which he dare not play lest he reveal himself to the Nazis from whom he is in hiding, imagines the music which would issue from the piano were he to play it.

In *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Elia Kazan, 1951) the madness and vulnerability of Blanche Dubois is emphasised by the use of subjective sound effects. In his first meeting with Blanche, Stanley explains that Stella has talked about her a great deal. 'She said you were married once, weren't you?' he asks. Blanche stares off into space with a troubled expression, and Stanley's words are repeated on the soundtrack in a subjective receding reverberant echo, demonstrating that the memory of her marriage is somehow traumatic for Blanche. 'The boy died,' she explains.

Later, almost in a trance of remembrance, Blanche tells Mitch how her young husband shot himself through the mouth with a revolver. At the climactic point in her story we hear the subjective sound of a gun-shot, dramatising her narrative.

[201] This is not always so: where memory is presented in flash-inserts, sound often remains in the present, as in *The Pawnbroker* and *Straw Dogs*.

Subsequently, when, having learned about her past, Mitch comes to confront her, Blanche approaches the window, distracted. Music appears on the soundtrack.

'There's that music again...'

'What music?' asks Mitch, confirming that the music on the soundtrack is an image of Blanche's imagination.

'The polka tune they were playing when...'

Shutting her eyes, she lifts her hand to her temple.

'Wait!...'

A subjective gun-shot resounds.

'Shot!'

The music continues.

'It always stops after that.'

The music recedes.

Finally, when the doctor comes to take her away, there is once more subjective sound, as the voices of the doctor and Stanley alternately echo through Blanche's mind. In terms of our developing central argument about the relation between representations of mental images and themes of madness, it is interesting to note the bias in contemporary medicine and psychiatry — which is perhaps reflected in cinema — whereby purely auditory images and hallucinations — imagined voices — are generally thought to be more indicative of madness than hallucinations in which there is a visual element.

Genericism and 'quasi-observation'

Mental images which are somehow qualitatively impoverished raise the question of the relationship between memory and imagination. Sartre speaks of the 'foggy

character of the irreal object.'[202] Our attitude in relation to the image is *quasi-observation*. In an important passage Sartre distinguishes this from perception:

> I can keep an image in view as long as I want: I will never find anything there but what I put there […] In the world of perception, no 'thing' can appear without maintaining an infinity of relations to other things […] in the image, on the other hand, there is a kind of essential poverty.[203]

This analysis is relevant to the specific form of many of cinema's representations of mental images — their generic, vague quality. In Part I we discussed the specific form of nostalgia images (wistful nondiegetic score; absence of diegetic sound), but where nostalgia images do not reprise previous scenes, in many cases we can question the status of such images as 'memories': to what extent are they memories, to what extent imagination? In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, David Hume argues that memory and imagination are to be distinguished only by the intensity of their images:

> the ideas of the memory are much more lively and strong than those of the imagination [...] When we remember any past event, the idea of it flows in upon the mind in a forcible manner; whereas in the imagination the perception is faint and languid, and cannot without difficulty be preserv'd by the mind steady and uniform for any considerable time.[204]

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[202] Sartre, J-P. (1940) *The Imaginary*, p.128

[203] *Ibid.*, p.9

[204] Hume, D. (1740) from *A Treatise of Human Nature*, in Rossington, M & A. Whitehead (eds) (2007) *Theories of Memory*, p.80

It is the indefinite nature of the sole term of distinction — intensity — which accounts for the frequent confusion between the two faculties:

> as an idea of the memory, by losing its force and vivacity, may degenerate to such a degree, as to be taken for an idea of the imagination; so on the other hand an idea of the imagination may acquire such a force and vivacity, as to pass for an idea of the memory, and counterfeit its effects on the belief and judgement.[205]

Indeed, Hume writes, 'We are frequently in doubt concerning the ideas of the memory, as they become very weak and feeble; and are at a loss to determine whether any image proceeds from the fancy or the memory.'[206] In many nostalgia images there is an element of genericism, a 'foggy character', a lack of specificity, no surrounding detail by which one might temporally or geographically situate the memory. It seems to us that this is because nostalgia images are invariably the product of voluntary memory. In Private Bell's images of his wife in *The Thin Red Line*, memory is suffused with imagination to create an idealised image of this woman. There are never any other people present in these images; where the location for the images is the bedroom, the shots are framed so closely that the bedroom remains generic — it could be any bedroom.

In *Fear X* (Nicolas Winding Refn, 2003), in the hotel room Harry's mental images of his wife are so vague that they seem to represent imagination more than memory. The

[205] *Ibid*., p.83

[206] *Ibid*.

camera zooms in on Harry as he sits on the bed. When we then cut to a different angle, there is no suggestion that we have left the present; indeed, Harry is wearing the same hooded raincoat in both shots. It is only when a hand appears and gently caresses his face that we understand that this is a mental image. Two factors suggest that these images are better understood as imagination rather than memory images. Firstly, the coat: while it is possible that Harry's wife once caressed him in this way, and that he was wearing this same coat, it seems more likely that it is the Harry of the present who is caressed by his (imaginary) wife rather than a Harry of the past (memory). The sequence of mental images does not commence when we cut from Harry on the bed to a closer shot of Harry from a different angle, but rather, when the hand enters this latter shot and strokes his face. Secondly, we must consider Harry's response when the hand appears and gently strokes his face. His cold unmoved response to this tender gesture is the response of the Harry of the present; his resigned expression suggests that he knows the hand is an illusion. (If these are memory images it is not clear why Harry looks so troubled while his wife caresses his face — like a man devastated by the tragic premature death of his young wife.)

But nostalgia images are not the only mental images which have this impoverished quality. There are the impure fragmentary pragmatic memory images we discussed in Part I, such as those of Kane in *The Saboteur*. In the three recollections in *Dressed to Kill*, the remembered objects — the gloved hand, the knickers, the wedding ring — all share a generic quality; they are isolated, situated in an extremely limited physical space, as is Oliverio's recollection of Raquel's callous dismissal in *Subida al cielo*. The reader may recall that in the introduction we requested that she accept the broad distinction we posited between memory and imagination in the organisation of the

thesis. So why now, in a discussion of imagination, speak of memory? Here we must acknowledge that in practice, and in time, memory tends to become infused with imagination. The generic quality of the recollections discussed above demonstrates that here memory *is imagination*; the subject recalls only what is necessary, what she 'puts there'[207]; the rest is omitted. More interesting still are the substantial flashbacks in *8 ½* — the 'asa nisi masa' flashback, the Saraghina episode — which also have a vague, generic, dream-like quality. These sequences seem to represent events the subject knows to have occurred but is unable to remember properly, memories embellished by imagination. Resnais's *L'année dernière à Marienbad* and Terence Davies's *Distant Voices, Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes* are, in quite different ways, composed of unnaturalistic, affected representations of the past which seem to express the irreducible subjectivity of events as they are remembered rather than an objective account of what actually happened. While, on principle, we have insisted that we are not concerned with the mental images of the director but with those of characters within the diegesis, in *The Long Day Closes*, as we have seen, the fact that Davies *is* Bud obliges us to revise our conceptual framework. The entire film can be understood as representing Davies's own mental images, his memories of his childhood, and it is this aspect that accounts for the fact that these autobiographical films appear quite unnaturalistic: this is life as it is remembered, rather than as it happened. Classical cinema's best representations of memory as generic, vague, a product of imagination, Fellini's distorted childhood memory sequences — these psychic qualities which in other films appear as moments or excerpts, are realised by Davies as a principle of aesthetic composition for the duration of entire films.

[207] Sartre, J-P. (1940) *The Imaginary*, p.9

The presence of the imagining subject within the imagined scene

We find an interesting innovation in representations of imagination in films which situate the imagining subject within the imaginary scene itself. In *Wild Strawberries* Isak imagines scenes from his youth at which he was not present. The elderly Isak appears within these scenes as a witness, though of course the people in the past do not acknowledge his presence. In *Ryan's Daughter* (David Lean, 1970), the schoolteacher, Charles, notices footsteps in the sand which he suspects belong to his wife, Rosy, and follows them along the beach to a rock with a pool of water. Following the footsteps which he has tracked, Charles imagines Rosy walking along the beach with her lover to the pool. As they approach, Charles hides behind the rock, but soon realises they cannot see him.

We find this mode of presenting imagination in two films which present the visions of a psychic. In *The Fury* (Brian De Palma, 1978), Gillian has visions involving Robin, a boy who shares her psychic powers and with whom she feels a connection. The imagined scene, though actually occurring at that moment in another place, is a representation of Gillian's imagination; at the same time, she appears within the vision, in, but separate from the imagined scene; we see the scene she imagines at the same time as we see her imagining it. While there is no question of her intervening in it, the fact that she is visually situated within the imagined scene effectively conveys the overwhelming, all-consuming experience of these visions. In *The Deadzone* (David Cronenberg, 1983), whenever he makes physical contact with another person, Johnny experiences psychic visions related to that person. In his first vision of the nurse's daughter, Amy, in her burning bedroom, Johnny appears within the imagined scene: he remains in the same position — lying horizontally on a bed — only now he

is no longer in the hospital bed of the present, but in Amy's burning bed within the vision. Later, when assisting the sheriff with his investigation, Johnny kneels in a snow-covered gazebo and takes the hand of a murdered woman, Elma. In the vision the murderer encourages her to come and join him; Elma approaches, and as she steps onto the gazebo the camera draws back, eerily revealing Johnny's presence on the gazebo, in exactly the same attitude as in the present. Johnny is greatly disturbed by this vision in which he witnesses a murder. 'I saw it,' he tells the Sheriff. 'I was there, I saw it. I stood there. I saw his face ... I stood there and watched him kill that girl!'

Cronenberg employs the technique more systematically in *Spider*. Jonathan Sklar and Andrea Sabbadini write,

> A sense of unconscious timelessness is conveyed by the film…The past of Spider's childhood (the 1950s) and the present of his life in a half-way house for former psychiatric patients (the year 1988) seem to coincide uncannily whenever, by telescoping generations, 'boy Spider' and 'grown-up Spider' are shown shoulder-to-shoulder in the same frame.[208]

Again, though the adult Spider is present within the remembered and imagined past scenes, there is no question of him intervening in them. However, in the scene of the sexual encounter between Spider's father, Bill, and his mistress, Evelyn, Spider momentarily takes Bill's place. After the sexual act in the tunnel, Bill faces the wall,

[208] Skalr, J. & A. Sabbadini (2008) 'David Cronenberg's *Spider*: Between confusion and fragmentation', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 89, pp.427-28

his back to the camera as he does up his fly. But as he turns we see not Bill (Gabriel Byrne), but the adult Spider (Ralph Fiennes), who delivers his father's line,

'I'm stopping here for a bit'.

(Evelyn sees and hears Bill, not Spider.)

In each of the examples discussed here, dispensing with the vraisemblance of a rigidly defined notion of realism facilitates the *simultaneous* presentation of the mental image itself and the subject in the act of imagining.

The merging of imagination and reality

The real and the imaginary worlds are metaphysically distinct: an imagined utterance has no claim to existence in the empirical world. However, occasionally we find irrational transgressions of this divide. In *La voie lactée* (*The Milky Way*) (Luis Buñuel, 1969) the pilgrims, Pierre and Jean, arrive at a gathering in a field where schoolgirls are giving their annual presentation. The teacher, Madame Garnier, introduces the performances: 'As you all know, this year has been a difficult one. Violence is everywhere, these days, but thanks be to God, our classes have been undisturbed ...' As she speaks the camera frames the young pilgrim, Pierre, and we cut to a brief insert of armed men and women marching through the street. The sound continues momentarily as we return to the present and, for a moment, Pierre seems disoriented. Madame Garnier introduces a religious recital, inviting the girls onto the stage, and as Pierre looks up there appears a further insert of armed men and women marching through the street, shells exploding in the distance. While the girls, in consecutive sequence, denounce various forms of heresy, inserts continue to obtrude into the scene. Now we see a Pope standing before a firing squad. As they fire, we

cut back to Pierre in the present, his eyes lowered. The man sitting next to him looks offscreen with some alarm, and asks,

> 'Is there a shooting-range near here?'
>
> 'No, it's me,' Pierre reassures him, 'I was imagining they were shooting a Pope.'

The implication is that, impossibly, the man hears the gunfire of Pierre's imagination. We understand this mischievous emphasis on and shattering of the metaphysical division of the real and the imaginary in the context of the surrealist influence on Buñuel.

Deleuze notes the tendency in modern cinema for the real and the imaginary to increasingly merge toward a point of indiscernibility.[209] This phenomenon is in evidence in *Audition* (Takashi Mikee, 1999). Aoyama collapses after drinking the whisky which was drugged by Asamai, the young woman whom he has selected to replace his wife. Henceforth it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish fantasy from reality. As Aoyama collapses we return to a previous scene of him and Asami dining in the restaurant, but now their conversation is completely different: instead of telling Aoyama that her family is quite normal, Asami explains how as a child she was abused by her step-father. But which version of this scene represents the truth? Is this Aoyama's memory of what Asami *really* told him at dinner? Or is this, rather, his imagining of the dark reality which Asami has concealed from him? As she recounts this story of her step-father's abuse we cut to Asami's apartment, where she lies on her back spread-eagled on the floor. It might be that this shot is purely autonomous, but it may also represent an act of imagination (which we could attribute

[209] *Cinema 2*, p.7, p.52, p.123

to either Asami or Aoyama). Let's assume for a moment that the sequence is not simply an autonomous act of narration, but represents an act of imagination — depending on whether or not this is the real version of the conversation in the restaurant, the status of this second act of imagination, in relation to the present, becomes quite remote. If the conversation in which Asami recounts the abuse she suffered really took place, then what we see is Aoyama's memory of it. The shot of Asami in her apartment could then be interpreted as either: Aoyama's memory of mental images he formed while listening to Asami's story; or, mental images formed at the present moment in response to the remembered conversation. On the other hand, if at dinner Asami really was guarded in her response to Aoyama's inquiry about her family, then the scene in which she recounts the horrors of her childhood must occur in Aoyama's imagination. In which case, the shot of Asami in her apartment becomes an act of imagination within an act of imagination. As Asami continues to recount her story in the restaurant we cut back to the apartment and then to an extreme close-up of a burn on Asami's inner right thigh. While Asami's voice from the restaurant continues to recount the story, the image remains in the apartment, the camera slowly tracking up her body to reveal that the recounting voice is that of the Asami in the apartment; the voice is no longer 'off' but 'on'. This sequence appears to follow a dream-like logic. The precise status of the sequence remains fundamentally ambivalent. It is possible, as we have seen, to construct various scenarios to account for certain of the images presented and for the illogical developments in the sequence, but the film endorses none of these specifically; it is intentionally equivocal.

Without focusing exclusively on any one class of imagination (fantasy, dream, etc.), we have here discussed aspects of the formal presentation of filmic representations of imagination in a general sense. We will now consider aspects of the functions of imagination in cinema.

IV. Function

The mental images of imagination perform many of the same functions as those of memory, thus we find here some situations and character types with which we are already familiar.

Pragmatism/Reasoning/Speculating/Re-enactment

Detectives employ imagination for pragmatic purposes, creating imaginary hypotheses. In *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994, U.S.), investigating the crime scene in which serial killer, Mallory Knox, seduced a petrol pump attendant, elicited oral sex from him on top of a sports car and then murdered him in cold blood, Detective Scagneti inspects the imprints left by her buttocks on the car bonnet. As he gazes at the bonnet he forms mental images of Mallory — pouting sensually and then blowing him a kiss — which appear on the bonnet, distorted by the contours of the bodywork like reflections in a false mirror at a fairground. But such a pragmatic use of imagination is not limited to the professional detective. There are others who, by force of necessity, become detectives.

In *Missing* (Costa-Gavras, 1982) a father, Ed, undertakes an investigation into the mysterious disappearance of his son, Charlie, in a Latin American country, following his arrest by the military police. As a neighbour who witnessed Charlie's arrest

describes the scene (Charlie's girlfriend translates), Ed looks over and from a point-of-view shot from Ed's perspective, without a cut, the scene the neighbour describes emerges, presenting Ed's visualisation of the scene she describes. When, in *Ryan's Daughter*, Charles follows his wife's footsteps in the sand and imagines her tryst with her lover — this is an act of detection, an effort to reconstruct the past based upon present evidence.

In *Shadow of a Doubt*, when Charlie discovers that the initials engraved on the ring Uncle Charlie gave her are the same as those of the murdered widow, extradiegetic images of ballroom dancing appear in a superimposition, and the 'Merry Widow' plays on the nondiegetic score. The superimposed images are symbolic of Uncle Charlie murdering the rich widows. In their first appearance, when Charlie insisted on keeping the ring despite its engraving, these images were superimposed upon images of Uncle Charlie in the present, apparently signifying an act of recollection. Now the same images are superimposed over images of Charlie, and represent her realisation that Uncle Charlie is a murderer. Given the presence of the music, we might also surmise that here Charlie makes a connection between this discovery and Uncle Charlie's fixation with the 'Merry Widow' waltz. (Later, when her mother hums the waltz, Charlie implores her to stop.) In Hitchcock's extra-diegetic use of 'The Merry Widow' it seems that the waltz represents an act of imagination which contributes to our understanding that the character — first Uncle Charlie and then Charlie — is remembering; imagination signifies memory. Charlie, too, is a detective. Uncle Charlie's strange behaviour presents her with a series of clues — his limp upon alighting the train, the ring, the newspaper house, the 'Blue Danube'/'Merry Widow' moment — which she is finally able to interpret by forming

chains of association: the initials of the dead widow — the ring — the 'Merry Widow'.

Stage Fright opens with a sequence which is ultimately revealed as a false flashback, as Johnny explains to Eve that he is on the run: Charlotte arrives at his house distressed with a blood-stained dress, explaining that she has killed her husband; but she has to perform that night and needs a dress for her performance. Johnny goes to her house, and while he retrieves the dress, the maid discovers the body and screams. As Johnny flees, the maid catches a glimpse of him. Having returned with the dress and sent Charlotte off for her performance, Johnny, now alone, reflects, and we see images of his imagination. Over his face in the present appear a series of superimpositions, after each of which his expression becomes increasingly agitated: Johnny leaves Charlotte's house and the maid rushes to the banister to see him flee; the maid tells the police what she saw; the police open the phonebook (to search for Johnny). The series of imaginings ends as the police arrive to apprehend him. Here again imagination is of pragmatic value — when the doorbell rings Johnny knows it is the police.[210]

[210] The status of these mental images appears dubious: they are true and false at the same time. False, in that none of the images contradict the story Johnny has told Eve (that he is innocent), which we ultimately discover to be false. True, in that after discovering the body, the maid did see Johnny fleeing the house; he really is worried about what she will tell the police and that the police will come for him (all the more so since he is in fact guilty). Upon first viewing the film we interpret these images as part of the flashback — as we imagine Johnny relates it to Eve — the veracity of which we as yet have no reason to question: 'When I got back and Charlotte left for work I started worrying about the maid having seen me flee the house and that she would surely tell the police ...'etc. Upon a second viewing, however, the images become ambiguous: we now know that the story Johnny told Eve is false, and since these mental images are part of this, one might logically assume that they too must be factitious. But this is not necessarily so: Yes, Johnny lies to Eve, but parts of his story are in fact true. Johnny really was at the house and the maid did see him flee. Thus the fact that Johnny lies to Eve does not necessarily mean that he did not experience these images. (See Turim's discussion of this film in *Flashbacks in Film*, pp.164-68.)

Excluding *Stage Fright*, which represents something of an anomaly in Hitchcock's oeuvre, Hitchcock's hero is an innocent man, implicated in a crime he did not commit; in order to prove his innocence and unravel the sinister plot in which he finds himself bound, he must think like a detective. But there are still other detectives whose search is entirely internal. In *Wild Strawberries*, Isak reconstructs an imagined past in order to come to terms with the path his life has taken. While there is certainly an element of nostalgia in his imaginings, there is also a palpable sense of lost time. (At the end of the first imagined past his voiceover explains, 'A feeling of emptiness overwhelmed me. A feeling of sadness'). Isak knows that his cousin Sara — his life's lost love — found him excessively pious and instead preferred his 'awfully naughty and thrilling' brother Sigfrid. He appreciates that around this time there must have been a flirtation — Sigfrid advanced, Sara acquiesced. Returning to the house of his childhood summers engenders the re-enactment of these scenes. Most striking here is the august endurance of the past. Isak is obsessed with the past; he cannot relinquish the thought of the happiness he might have shared with Sara. With all the years that have passed, he still recalls, re-imagines, laments the events of fifty years before. In contrast to the pragmatic imagination of the professional detective, Isak's imaginings have no immediate use value; rather, they offer catharsis.

In *Spider*, the hero relives past scenes in an attempt to come to terms with his involvement in his mother's murder. As noted above, the adult Spider physically appears within these scenes, often watching closely (and remembering) the utterances and actions of his younger self. But he also appears in several scenes at which the young Spider is — hence was — absent. These latter scenes are imaginings, speculations based partly on fact and in part on fantasy. In these wholly imaginary

scenes Spider obsessively documents what is said. He, too, is a detective, excavating, re-imagining the past; ultimately his obsessive detective work is revealed to be the confused investigation of a deeply disturbed man.

Guilty conscience

But at what point does the pragmatic imagining of the detective become an obsession? In *The Conversation* Harry prides himself on his professionalism in recording conversations for corporate contracts. Harry claims to be interested only in the quality of the recording, but in fact he becomes obsessed by a desire to discover what the conversation is about and whether any harm will come to the two interlocutors as a result of his work. In the past, Harry's work has resulted in the deaths of three people in a political scandal. He is haunted by guilt and fears that this might happen again. The more of the conversation he manages to render, the more certainly Harry will know whether violence will result from his work. While he would like to envisage himself as a professional wire-tapper who respects a religious ethical code, he is aware of (and tormented by) the fact that such a notion is inherently contradictory. When Harry forms visual images of the young couple while on a subway train, this is evidence of his growing obsession with the recording. Though, professionally, Harry is a detective of sorts, his real motivation is personal. The driving force behind his detective work is his burden of religious guilt.

Often, in Hitchcock, mental images convey a guilty conscience. In *Blackmail* (1929), on her way home after stabbing the artist to death, Alice seizes on objects of her perception which remind her of the murder: a flashing neon image of a cocktail being poured momentarily becomes a dagger performing a stabbing motion. As she

continues her walk home, flash-inserts present her memory of the dead man's arm; she passes a beggar and the position of his body reminds her of the dead man.

In each case here — for the professional detectives, for Hitchcock's innocent men who become detectives, for the introspective subjects, as well as for those like Harry Caul with a guilty conscience — it is the past to which we return, which is re-imagined, reconstructed or reconstituted. Far less common are representations of an imagined future.

Anticipation

La guerre est finie constitutes a *tour de force* in representations of imagination. The film presents a few stress-filled days in the life of Diego, a Spanish revolutionary working for the overthrow of Franco. Diego remembers, imagines, speculates, hypothesises, and, what is most unique to this film, he anticipates the future. Such representations of an imagined or anticipated future seem to correspond to what Philip di Franco calls '*future imperfect time*, wherein events are rendered as visual fulfilments of imagined ideas in the mind of a character.'[211] The status of many of the inserts in the film is equivocal. Do they represent Diego's remembrance of recent events which were previously elided, events prior to the first plotted event, his anticipation of events to come, events we will not see, events we will subsequently see but which occur differently to how he imagines they might? Are the numerous inserts which seem to represent Diego's anticipation of his crucial meeting with his revolutionary comrades to be understood as the mental images of his imagination or as autonomous flash-forwards? Might we understand these inserts to *signify* that

[211] Franco, P.D. (1968) 'Past, Present, Future in Cinema,' *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 8, No.1 (Autumn, 1968), p.42, my emphasis

Diego anticipates the meeting, while presenting actual images from the meeting which are not and necessarily cannot be identical with the images of his imagination?

Several times Diego forms mental images during conversation. Near the beginning, he tells the bookshop owner's wife Marie about how, when he was questioned by the police, he had to speak on the phone to Nadine Sallanches, the daughter of the man he was impersonating.

> 'Do you know her?' asks Marie.
>
> 'No,' Diego explains. 'I don't know any of them. I know all about them, but I don't know any of them.'

In quick succession, appear images of three different women walking in the street, and while Marie resumes conversation, the three women, in successive shots, each make the same entrance into a café. It seems these inserts represent Diego's imagining of what Nadine Sallanches might look like. (Later, when he is on the train, again an insert presents shots of a series of young women, in rapid succession — turning a corner, descending a staircase, walking along a street; the third woman turns into the Sallanches' address at 7 Rue de L'estrapade. Over these silent inserts, the unrelated conversation of the couple opposite Diego in the dining car of the present continues, this audiovisual asynchrony effectively conveying the simultaneity of his experience of — visual — imagination and — acoustic — sensory impressions of the present. Later still, when Diego leaves Ramon's house, a brief inserted sequence presents a zoom in on Marie, and then of the Sallanches' address, immediately after which Diego arrives at the address and finally meets Nadine.)

As they descend the stairs to open up the bookshop, Jude says to Diego, 'Antoine must be at the station.' With this appear three rapid inserts of Antoine at the station. In each successive shot he turns as the camera approaches him, as though these are imaginary point-of-view shots from Diego's perspective. When Diego meets Antoine at the station and finds that there is no news of Juan's arrival and that Juan would have gone through Perpignan in any case, he has a presentiment that Juan may have been arrested: an insert presents Juan turning as two men approach him from behind. Diego asks Antoine if he knows who handles the crossings at Perpignan, and an insert presents Diego rushing and boarding a train as it departs. In the present Diego enquires at the desk about a ticket to Perpignan. He rushes past commuters through the subway and boards the train just as it is departing. The earlier insert, then, was a flash-forward. The insert is autonomous inasmuch as it presents the future events that it anticipates exactly as they will occur. On the other hand, the fact that the insert appears when it does seems to signify an act of imagination. While speaking with Antoine, Diego anticipates that he will shortly catch the train. In place of the mental images of his imagination, the film breaks chronological sequence by presenting him actually catching the train; soon after this Diego does catch the train, and the images of the insert reappear in their proper place in the chronological succession.

After seeking out a contact at an apartment block only to discover he has the wrong address, Diego waits for the elevator and we cut back and forth between the elevator lights and images of his imagination. His internal monologue explains and contextualises these inserts — smiling, Juan leaves, waving from a car window; Juan

is assaulted (*Perhaps Juan did go, and he'll walk into the trap*);[212] a man smiles as he approaches (Diego) (*Roberto. You must find Roberto now*); a swift track in on a middle-aged woman with an anxious expression (*She'll wonder what's wrong*. *She'll realise something's happened to her husband.*) Diego alights from a street car. The internal monologue establishes that he is going to visit the wife of Andres, a revolutionary who has gone missing; he would rather not see her now, but only she can lead him to Roberto. As he ascends in the elevator again an insert presents the middle-aged woman, bearing an expression of acute anxiety. When he arrives at the apartment, we see that the occupier, Carmen, is the woman whose dread Diego has anticipated since alighting the streetcar. As he had imagined, upon learning that something is wrong, she is distraught.

Diego's mental images evidence parallel and separate patterns of thought, which juxtapose the various women in his life and his work in the liberation movement. Alone in his apartment, he recalls his earlier conversation with Marie. Explaining to her that Nadine Sallanches had not blown his cover when the police telephoned her and he impersonated her father, Diego remarked that he had a 'lucky star'. Speaking aloud in the present — 'A tiny little star for personal use ... A starfish for every purpose' — he recalls an image of Marie. A few moments later he forms an image of his wife, Marianne, which does not seem to revive any specific previous perception. Soon after this, Diego retrieves a secret message from a tube of cream. Unravelling the message, he anticipates an important meeting with his comrades. He then speaks aloud, recalling his earlier tryst with Nadine — 'My name is "Nana. And mine is

[212] All excerpts of internal monologue and imagined voices, including internal monologue, are presented in italic font for reasons that will become apparent in the next chapter, when we consider some interesting cases where internal monologue alternates with recalled voices and actual utterances in the present.

"Sunday"' — reclines on his bed with a book, and again imagines Marianne, lying in bed, apparently in thought, a tear in her eye. A few moments later Marianne returns and they make love. In the post-coital scene, Diego again anticipates his forthcoming meeting with his comrades.

Any generalisation which would identify all of the inserts in the film which anticipate the future as either representations of the mental images of Diego's imagination or as autonomous flash-forwards would be an oversimplification. In many cases, the phenomenological status of the images is impossible to determine. Towards the end of the film, however, there is an interesting case which can unequivocally be identified as a representation of the mental images of Diego's imagination. After informing Diego that he is to go to Barcelona to meet Juan after all, Marianne suggests they go to the cinema. An insert appears of a man putting a suitcase in a locker. Like many of the previous inserts, upon first viewing it is impossible to tell whether this is a representation of the mental images of Diego's imagination or an autonomous flash-forward (the presence of which nevertheless indicates that Diego simultaneously forms mental images in which he anticipates putting the suitcase in a locker, but that these images are not identical with the flash-forward insert presented). As they prepare to leave, Diego announces that on their way he will leave his suitcase in a locker at the station. When at the station we see Marianne — and not Diego — put the suitcase in a locker, we understand that the earlier insert, which presented a man (presumably Diego) putting the suitcase in the locker, was not an objective flash-forward but the mental images of Diego's imagination.

The difference between the representation of the imaginative experience of Diego and that of countless other characters in cinema, whose mental processes are essentially no different, is that Resnais presents Diego's thoughts. The result is a film which is stylistically unconventional, which is sometimes disorienting, in which it is not always clear precisely what the phenomenological status of a given insert is, but which constitutes a significant advance in filmic representations of imagination. While *La guerre est finie* proffers a sustained effort to represent the imagined futures of mental subjectivity, we find rare isolated instances of depictions of an imagined future in classical cinema in two of Hitchcock's films.

In *Sabotage* (1936) two men discuss sabotage operations in an aquarium. Having been ordered to plant a bomb at Piccadilly Circus, Verloc stands before an enormous fish-tank, and, as he gazes at it, the tank dissolves into an image of Piccadilly Circus, which then deliquesces. Verloc's imagining of the devastation for which he will be responsible, should he fulfil his orders, complicates his character. This is, then, an expression of guilty conscience which precedes the criminal act itself. In *Suspicion* Lina's mental images take the form of a premonition. Whilst playing scrabble she begins to suspect — prompted by Beaky's suggestion that if he had an 'ER' he could turn 'MURDER' into 'MURDERER' — that her husband Johnny may at that very moment be arranging with his friend a meeting at which he will murder him. She focuses on the photograph of the proposed location for Johnny's property development plan; with Lina's face superimposed, the photograph then becomes the actual cliff-top and Lina imagines Johnny pushing Beaky from the cliff. In conversation with Johnny (present) Beaky laughs, and this diegetic laugh morphs into Lina's imagining of Beaky's cry as she pictures him falling to his death. Johnny does

not murder him the next morning, but Beaky does subsequently die on a trip to France with Johnny. In fact the film never decisively reveals whether or not Lina's suspicions are well-founded. Either her mental images are a dreadful premonition of a fatal act of violence (which is subsequently realised when Beaky does eventually die), or this is a hysterical episode (Lina has good reason to be suspicious of Johnny — she has proof of his dishonesty, he has gambled her money — but it does not follow from this that he is a murderer).

Several of the examples discussed here — Alice's momentary hallucination in *Blackmail*, Harry Caul's growing obsession with the couple whose conversation he has recorded in *The Conversation*, Mr Clegg's obsessive documenting of utterances in an imaginary past in *Spider* — indicate a deeper tendency which we believe to be highly significant, and which, as we have already indicated, will inform much of our discussion henceforth: namely, that many representations of imagination are related to themes of madness. Present to some extent in many of the states or conditions in which representations of imagination are experienced, often by quite sane characters, are traces of madness: imagined voices (often a manifestation of paranoia), waking fantasies, dreams, drug-induced hallucinations, genuine hallucinations, psychic visions, belief in the supernatural — each of these mental states can, it may be argued, in some sense be considered a manifestation of madness. We will subsequently pursue further our hypothesis about the relation between representations of mental images and themes of madness in cinema in a taxonomy of the major forms of imagination (Chapter 5-7), but we presently extend this argument in our discussion of imagined voices.

Chapter 4. Imagined voices

Imagined voices are as much mental images as are visual images, though they represent semantic rather than visual thought. I remind the reader that excerpts of internal monologue and imagined voices are presented in italic font to distinguish these passages from actual utterances spoken aloud (dialogue) or remembrances of such utterances (recalled voices).

Internal monologue

As a narrational device, voiceover is similar to the narrational 'voice' passages in a novel. But in this form the device is invariably limited to the use of the past tense, and is thus distinct from the experience of mental images in the present. Thus I distinguish this traditional 'voiceover' from 'internal monologue' — often referred to as 'stream-of-consciousness voiceover' — which presents thought as it is experienced in the present moment, and which seems to derive less from the narrational voice of the novel than from the theatrical soliloquy.

Formal aspects - Second-person narration and temporal disjunction

In *La Guerre est finie*, Diego's internal monologue is presented in the second person 'you' form, and seems to be spoken not in the voice of Diego, but comes from an anonymous voice which addresses him directly, but which at the same time represents his consciousness. Here the grammatical distancing of Diego's inner thoughts functions as a permanent expression of his internalisation of the emotional detachment and military organisation which certain of his comrades in the liberation movement exhibit more profoundly. This is particularly evident when he visits Carmen. Approaching her apartment, he thinks, *You'd rather not see her today. And*

yet you need her. She's the one who can take you to Roberto. Upon learning that her husband is missing, Carmen is devastated; Diego thinks, *But you must wrest her from her grief, her solitude. She knows where to find Roberto*.

Diego's benevolence and compassion have alienated him from some of his comrades, particularly Roberto. Inwardly, Diego describes his comrades as, *desiccated, tireless, worn-out men, fastidious about detail but less clear about the larger picture, ready to die.* This last complaint satirises and is in sharp contradistinction to Roberto's previous insistence that news of arrests in Madrid may have been exaggerated: '[in Spain] They're too close to things to see the situation clearly ... We [in Paris] have a broader perspective.' This theme of the details and the big picture is satirised again when, at the conclusion of his meeting with his comrades, the chief addresses Diego privately, and the soundtrack substitutes his thoughts for his words (his thoughts, as we shall see, apparently identical with the words he utters aloud): *Perhaps the details of a partial reality have blinded you. The dozens of tiny, true little details have clouded your vision. You'll take a break.*

The crucial meeting with his revolutionary colleagues provides an exhibition of internal monologue. As Diego opens the meeting with an exposition of the situation with the arrests in Madrid, the sound of his voice recedes and internal monologue reveals his thoughts: he is tired and disillusioned with the liberationist movement and with the cold pragmatism of his comrades. The fact that Diego's thoughts are here presented simultaneous with his verbal address distinguishes this case from the others we shall come to look at. We said that internal monologue constitutes a representation of mental images experienced in the present. No doubt, in

conversation — while our interlocutor speaks, or during the pauses and interstices of our own discourse — we form semantic mental images, rehearsing how we might respond to our interlocutor's point, or repeating what our interlocutor has said. But to address a group of people in this way while following an entirely separate current of thought seems quite impossible. Thus, here, Diego's internal monologue reveals itself as temporally detached from the unfolding scene.

After Diego's opening exposition, the chief of the underground network says, 'Carlos [Diego] has given us a completely subjective view of the situation.' Diegetic sound then recedes and the soundtrack presents the internal thoughts of the chief, which echo the words he has just spoken, *Carlos has given us a completely subjective view of the situation*. Unlike Diego's thoughts, which reveal a subjective state of disillusion which runs counter to the verbal address we imagine he delivers, the chief's thoughts apparently correspond approximately with what we imagine, and what it seems, he says. His thoughts conclude with a characterisation of Diego's position: Carlos advises that they should consider the 'realities of the situation'. *But what does "realities of the situation" really mean? That we should allow the political situation to come to a head on its own? That's mere opportunism, pure and simple!* Diego's rejoinder — 'I never said we should just let things develop spontaneously' — confirms this identity between the chief's verbal discourse and his inner thoughts.

While in the previous exchange the thoughts of the speaker were presented simultaneously with his verbal address, now, as Diego speaks, the soundtrack presents the chief's thoughts: *You never said we should just let things develop spontaneously. You merely question certain forms of action under certain circumstances.* The fact

that these thoughts are apparently experienced while Diego is speaking suggests that the chief is not properly listening to him. And, as the following passage of conversation demonstrates, the chief's thoughts — apparently quite unrelated to whatever it is (we do not know because we do not hear) Diego is saying — anticipate what he himself will say next. This passage of the chief's thoughts concludes, *Lenin voiced criticisms of a general strike insofar as it tends to preclude other forms of struggle*; and as Diego concludes whatever he was saying, the chief proceeds to reference Lenin. Now, while the chief speaks, we hear Diego's thoughts: *If you wish to discuss Lenin, then we'll discuss Lenin.* And, as did those of the chief, Diego's thoughts anticipate his next comments. His thoughts conclude with: *Your criticism is purely negative. What are you really proposing?*; then, translating his criticism of the chief into a neutral grammatical form, he says aloud, 'Criticism is always negative at first.'

In his dialogue with the chief there are moments when Diego's inner thoughts seem to be temporally detached from the unfolding scenes, as though the scenes had already happened, the internal voice offering a retrospective subjective commentary. Moments later, when such a relationship will enhance the dramatic effect of an exchange, internal monologue once more seems to represent thought as experienced in the present. Deviations between what a character seems to be saying and what we hear him thinking expose subtle psychological contrasts between the interlocutors: the chief seems to say almost exactly what he thinks, while there is a subtle process of censorship between Diego's thought and speech — his speech is more diplomatic than his thoughts.

Multiple internal monologues

Ordinarily internal monologue is exclusively limited to the central protagonist, but occasionally a film presents the thoughts of several characters, just as in a novel the narrational voice may provide access to the thoughts of several different characters. *Annie Hall* features an interesting case of internal monologue which marks the beginning of Alvy and Annie's relationship. Alvy and Annie speak on the roof of her building, and each interlocutor's inner thoughts are presented in subtitles as a counterpoint to their actual conversation. As Annie says that she would like to enrol on a photography course, Alvy thinks, *I wonder what she looks like naked*. Alvy then talks about how photography is a relatively new art form and so a 'set of aesthetic criteria have not yet emerged'. While Annie continues the conversation, her inner thoughts — *I'm not smart enough for him. Hang in there* — reveal that she is slightly intimidated by the intellectual current of his conversation. There are not here two conversations, one actual, the other virtual, but one conversation, and two separate internal monologues.

In *Der Himmel Über Berlin* (*Wings of Desire*) (Wim Wenders, 1987) we hear the inner thoughts of many different characters. Usually internal monologue has two functions: on the one hand, it enables the imagining subject to articulate thoughts to herself; at the same time, it grants the spectator access to these thoughts. The internal monologues in *Der Himmel Über Berlin* have a third aspect in that they are justified as imaginary utterances by the presence of the angels, who, as it were, overhear the thoughts of the various people they encounter. [213]

[213] Other films with multiple internal monologues include *The Beguiled*, *Dune* (David Lynch, 1984), and *Hannah and Her Sisters* (Woody Allen, 1986).

Comedy and fatalism in *Tirez sur le pianiste*

A French New Wave film, *Tirez sur le pianiste*, combines tropes of various genres and is characterised by sharp contrasts between the tribulations of its protagonists and light-hearted self-reflexive authorial flourishes. Charlie's internal monologue is sometimes a source of humour, but also conveys his philosophical fatalism. As in the above scene from *Annie Hall*, the early examples of internal monologue in *Tirez sur le pianist* manifest the limitations of individual subjectivity in a romantic situation, the void of doubt and uncertainty that pervades a courtship (What is a woman thinking? What relation is there between what she is thinking and her external conduct? How must I appear to her?) When walking home Léna, a waitress at the bar at which he is pianist, Charlie twice goes to take her hand, but she evades him. Then he goes to put his arm around her waist but changes his mind. His inner thoughts confirm his tentative indecision: *She'll wonder why you don't speak. Say something...anything.* Hiding from the men who were following them, Charlie and Léna finally make physical contact. Having lost them, as they resume their walk, Charlie thinks, *She felt me near. She didn't mind, or she'd have moved away. So she's willing...for what?* As they walk, the camera moves in on him so that she is out of shot. Charlie continues to procrastinate, rehearsing what he might say, *Invite her for a drink. Gain time. Make it sound casual. "Come for a drink?" No, that won't do, be nicer. "Léna, I bet you're thirsty. So am I"* He turns and asks, 'Like a drink?', but she has gone. His attention dominated by Léna while she is in his presence, Charlie now instantly dismisses her from his thoughts and considers the relative merits of various jazz pianists: *Think of something else. Is Art Tatum talented? Or Erroll Garner? Yes, Garner's talented. Junie Manse? You don't know anything about him.* After being kidnapped and then escaping from the gangsters, Léna takes

Charlie's arm. *She took your arm, just like that. She's taking you to her place.* Following Léna upstairs to her apartment, Charlie thinks, *Don't look at her legs. But I must look down, or I'll stumble.*

Upon entering Léna's apartment Charlie sees the poster of Edouard Saroyan and a flashback ensues, which, as we have seen, is initiated by Léna's narration, but which unfolds from Charlie's perspective, and which presents an exposition of his former life as a concert pianist. Edouard's internal monologue intervenes at the crucial moment in the flashback. Theresa confesses that she slept with Schemeel, who in return advanced Edouard's career. She imagined she could forget it, but can't: 'What you did yesterday is part of you today ... I don't want you to touch me. Don't touch this dirt!' Edouard thinks, *Yes, look at her, go to her, kneel while there's time. If you go now she'll be alone. You mustn't*, but he walks away nonetheless. Moments later Theresa kills herself, and we understand the extent of Charlie's guilt.

In the present, Charlie and Léna go to the bar and Léna confronts their boss, Plyne, angry that he gave the gangsters their addresses. While they argue, Charlie turns away and thinks:

> *Plyne's a bastard, but she's tough on him. He wants her, but there's nothing doing. Even now he can't take his eyes off her. She's piling it on, but what can I say? That Plyne's not so bad, he just wanted to be somebody? That's it; you don't want to tell her. It's not your business. Just take your place at the piano. You can't help Plyne or anyone, you're not concerned with anything.*

Though he knows Plyne betrayed him and Léna, Charlie sympathises with him. Still, this sympathy is overridden by a fatalistic sense of apathy. But when Plyne is about to assault her, Charlie intervenes and a fight ensues. Charlie's philosophical sympathy for Plyne makes the fact that he now kills him in a fight sadly ironic. Apart from being the source of some humour in his courting of Léna, Charlie's internal monologue gives expression to his resignation, his fatalism, his emotional detachment. In a general way this might be interpreted as a symptom of the popular influence of the contemporary existential thought of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.

Transgression of codes

Unscrupulousness

In *Quicksand* (Irving Pichel, 1950), Dan steals $20 from the till of the garage where he works in order to take Vera on a date. At this significant moment, internal monologue presents his thoughts: *Nobody checks my cash except this once-a-week bookkeeper, and he doesn't come around till Thursday. I could put it back before Thursday; I could put it back tomorrow, as soon as I get that twenty bucks from Buzz.* Thus, Dan is not a career criminal, but is unscrupulous enough to take the first steps on what the film ultimately presents as being an extremely steep and slippery slope. When he notices the book-keeper returning unexpectedly, Dan is distressed: *What's he doing here two days at a time? 'He finds out I'm short, he'll tell the old man. The old man's mean enough to send a guy to jail just for laughs. I gotta get twenty bucks in a hurry.* After mugging a man in a car park, Dan spots his ex-girlfriend Helen and seizes the opportunity to join her in order to appear less conspicuous. This demonstrates his callous attitude towards Helen, who still loves him, though Dan is no

longer interested in her romantically. As they walk along the pier Dan's effort to appear calm is juxtaposed against the exhilarated relief his inner thoughts express: *My knees were really shaking back there. I thought the cops'd bust outta that alley any minute.* But then Dan's relief gives way to selfish thoughts. Recalling Vera, he immediately forgets Helen: *Yeah but...now I'm in the clear, with heavy dough in my pocket. I can pay off that jewellery store and have enough left over to show Vera the biggest time she ever had. Vera!...I've got a date with her tonight!*

Here the presentation of Dan's thoughts enables us to judge him. He was foolish and unscrupulous, but despite his crimes, his selfishness and his callous treatment of Helen, he is not ultimately a malevolent character. He is an ordinary man who makes a series of stupid mistakes, and his problems escalate beyond his control. He is attracted to the glamorous Vera (who turns out to be more materialistic, self-centred and callous than he is, and who ultimately betrays him), whom he prefers to Helen (who, despite Dan's rejection, remains loyal to him throughout); he tries to take short-cuts, therefore he must be punished, and his ordeal — being pursued by the police, going on the run — is this punishment. But, as his inner thoughts establish, he is not fundamentally malevolent and thus when he meets the lawyer at the end and repents his crimes, when he finally appreciates the qualities of the loyal and devoted Helen, he is granted reprieve.

Religion, race, violence, and fire in *Mean Streets*

In *Quicksand*, though Dan eventually reforms himself, the presentation of his internal thoughts is limited to the expression of his fall from righteousness. By contrast, in *Mean Streets* (Martin Scorsese, 1973), Charlie is from the outset situated within a

culturally specific milieu of crime which has its own ethical code. Charlie knows the limitations of this code, but, because of a vague sense of religious obligation — his efforts to help Johnny — and because of the natural direction of his desire — his attraction to Diane — he feels the repressive constraints of this code, which he ultimately transgresses. While in *Quicksand*, Dan's internal monologue marks his temptation to deviate from a moral code which the audience recognise and accept as their own, here Charlie's thoughts reveal the tension produced by the conflict of his will with the limitations of the codes — religious, cultural, racial, familial — which constrain him, codes which are specific to the Italian-American criminal underworld depicted, but which much of the audience does not share.

At the start of the film, as he stands alone in church, Charlie's inner thoughts establish his complicated relationship with his Roman Catholic heritage. He cannot identify with the popular ritualistic understanding of faith. Standing before a statue of Jesus, Charlie asks, *What do you say, eh? That it's all bullshit except the pain, right? The pain of hell, the burn from a lighted match increased a million times*. With this, he touches the flame of a candle, as if to sample the infinite power of God. Later, in Tony's club, Charlie tries to hold his fingers in the flame of a lighted match.

'You're crazy!' his friend says,

'Priest taught me that,' Charlie replies.

The opening scene established that Charlie's fascination with fire signifies his vague sense of religious awe, but this is not all. Immediately after this exchange in the club, watching the black topless dancer Diane, he thinks:

> *You know something? She is really good looking. I gotta say that again: She is really good looking. But she's black. Now you can see that real plain, right? Well, there's not much of a difference anyway, is there? Well, is there?*

In the Italian-American milieu that the film presents, such an interracial attraction is fiercely prohibited. Charlie's fascination with fire thus becomes symbolic also of his prohibited attraction to Diane. He subsequently arranges a date with her on the pretext that he wants her to work as a hostess in a restaurant. When the time to meet her arrives, Charlie instructs the driver not to stop, but to 'drive by real slow', and he thinks, *Are you crazy? That's all I need now is to get caught in the village with a melanzana*.[214]

Charlie's inner thoughts also concern his relationship with Johnny. Near the beginning of the film, Michael expresses his concern about Johnny's debt and about Charlie's association with him. Charlie assures him that Johnny will pay. When Johnny subsequently arrives and checks his trousers in at the cloakroom, Charlie is alarmed by his exhibitionism: *All right, ok, thanks a lot, Lord, thanks a lot for opening my eyes*. Charlie rationalises his efforts to help Johnny through recourse to his idiosyncratic understanding of religious ethics. 'Who's gonna help him if I don't?' he asks Teresa. 'That's what's the matter. Nobody, nobody ... nobody tries anymore ... Tries to ... to help people, that's all ... Saint Francis of Assisi had it all down.' Later, in the restaurant, Charlie's uncle warns him about Johnny, advising, 'Honourable men go with honourable men.' Shortly after this, in the restaurant kitchen, Charlie is immediately drawn to the flame of the fire. He grimaces as he

[214] 'Melanzana' is Italian for aubergine (the Americans call aubergine 'eggplant'), the skin of which is black with a purplish tint. In Italian-American dialect it is a common racial insult against black people.

holds his hand in the flame and his thought — *Fire* — encapsulates his sense of the august forces of religion. Charlie's obsession with fire is now also metonymically associated with his relationship with Johnny (which is literally dangerous — he could get physically hurt). Charlie's inner thoughts thus establish Scorsese's principal obsessions: religion, race, violence.

Amour fou

Laura's internal monologue in *Brief Encounter* is provocative even today. Sitting silently with her sewing while her husband Fred contentedly completes his crossword, she addresses her internal thoughts to him, recounting the story of her romantic affair with her lover, Alec, and the film unfolds in a series of flashbacks. The scandal is in the juxtaposition. On the surface, we have a cosy domestic scene, but Laura's internal monologue desecrates this image. The presentation of her internal thoughts profanes her husband and her marriage, and renders the scene excruciating. Laura's calm demeanour in the present, Fred's apparent ignorance of her affair and inner thoughts, Laura's apparent lack of any genuine shame or repentance — the combination of these elements render some moments in the film unbearably cruel, but the key to it all is Laura's internal monologue, by which the entire narrative becomes her imaginary confession to Fred.

When he invites her back to his friend's flat and Laura declines, Alec says, 'I'm going back to the flat,' and Laura returns to the train station. But while she is waiting, the soundtrack presents an interesting subjective sequence in which Laura's internal monologue alternates with her memory (recalled voices) of Alec's words: *I really must go home* — I'm going back to the flat — *I must go home, I must go home* — I'm

going back to the flat — *I'm going home.* This sequence effectively conveys a juxtaposition of conflicting desires: desire and *amour fou* oppose duty, decency, honour and propriety; in Freud's terms, libido battles with repression. Like Max in *Videodrome*, Laurel in *In a Lonely Place,* and Adela in *Passage to India*, Laura is attracted to a proscribed object of desire. Her affair with Alec is prohibited, since she is married. Here again, internal monologue presents the thoughts of an unscrupulous character, but like Dan in *Quicksand*, Laura is not an entirely malevolent character. She has fallen madly in love, and broken one of society's fundamental prohibitions. To identify with Laura is to be implicated in her transgression. (Perhaps the vicarious thrill of adultery by proxy accounts for the enduring popularity and effectiveness of this film.)

In each of these three films, internal monologue is associated with transgression, the breaking of prohibitions, and in each case the code of rules and expectations is different. In the following discussion we will consider films in which there is a manifest link between internal monologue and themes of madness.

Internal monologue and madness

Past trauma

In *Hiroshima mon amour*, after sharing with the Japanese the story of her tragic affair with a German officer and subsequent ignominy and confinement, the woman returns to her hotel room and, looking in the mirror, she talks to herself and her utterances are juxtaposed with her inner thoughts:

> *One thinks one knows, but one never does* — Her first love, in Nevers, was German. We shall go to Bavaria, my love, and we will wed. She never went to Bavaria. Let those who never went to Bavaria dare talk to her of love — *You were not quite dead. I told our story. I betrayed you tonight with that stranger. I told our story. It could be told, you see* — Not for fourteen years had I experienced an impossible love. Not since Nevers — *See how I forget you, see how I have forgotten you. Look at me.*

She is obsessed by the past, which she must confront and come to terms with if she is to become well. Her memories of Nevers are complicated. On the one hand, she explains, 'I grew up in Nevers. I learned to read in Nevers. And it was there that I was twenty years old.' She fondly describes the Loire to the Japanese, and it is clear that she cherishes memories of the landscape of Nevers. On the other hand, it was in Nevers that she was socially ostracised and confined in a cellar after the death of her lover.

The man senses that her experience in Nevers has scarred her, and encourages her to share this experience with him, in order that she might overcome it; in short, he assumes the role of therapist, and she that of patient. When she confirms that she hasn't told the story to anyone else, not even her husband, they embrace, and the cathartic value of the process is explicit. Subsequently, in her hotel room, slightly drunk, she inevitably regrets being so loquacious with a stranger. In her inner thoughts she addresses her dead lover directly, *I betrayed you ... see how I've forgotten you!* Scarred by her past experience, the woman's conversation with the Japanese marks a significant personal achievement, the overcoming of a tremendous

psychological obstacle. But, given the strength of feeling, it is only natural that later she should regret it. Thus afterwards, alone, internal monologue intervenes to chasten her; it is a residual symptom of her bondage to the past, which she will now surely begin to overcome.

Paranoia

In *Stranger on the Third Floor*, Ward's inner thoughts reveal his escalating paranoia, which is fuelled by his increasing sense of guilt that Briggs, the man whom he helped to convict, may have been innocent. On his way home from the trial he returns to the empty courtroom and recalls Briggs's earnest protestations of innocence as he was condemned: 'I didn't do it, I didn't!' But Ward immediately banishes these doubts: *What's the matter with me? He did, 'course he did*. But then he recalls his fiancée Jane's caution: 'Suppose, for just one minute, that he's telling the truth.' Ward reflects:

> *I wonder if she's right. After all, I didn't see Briggs actually kill Nick. And the rest of the evidence was circumstantial, too. So what? That doesn't make it less reliable. If the courts had to have an eye witness for everything, nobody would ever be convicted. Sometimes they do get the wrong man. Why did he have to have a criminal record? Now they'll have to give him the chair. He'll die and...I'll never know for sure.*

Soon afterwards, after chasing a strange man from his building, Ward notices that his neighbour Maine is not snoring as he usually does:

> *He must be awake. Maybe he heard that man in the hall. Why's he so quiet? I can't hear a sound. Is there...is there something wrong with him? That man — maybe he did something to him...Maybe he killed him. What's the matter with me? I'm acting like an old woman.*

Ward anxiously reasons that if Maine is dead, he might be implicated, and he recalls several past incidents which would support such an allegation. He becomes convinced of this, but then reasons that he is getting carried away: *Poor Jane. They'll drag her into it. But Maine isn't dead! What's the matter with me? I'm just tired. I can't think straight anymore. If I could only drive it out of my mind.*

Ward's paranoia is precipitated by his growing sense of guilt for his part in the conviction of Briggs, who turns out to be innocent. His inner thoughts reflect this paranoia, but the growing sense of guilt which drives his paranoia is entirely justifiable and rational.

Megalomania

In *Shock Corridor* (Samuel Fuller, 1963), journalist Johnny Barrett gets admitted to a mental hospital in order to investigate a murder, but during the course of his investigation, he himself becomes insane. The presentation of his internal thoughts charts his passage into insanity. But signs of Johnny's imperiousness and ambition are present from the outset in his internal monologue. In the opening scene he rehearses a mock interview with Dr Fong in preparation for his actual psychiatric assessment. Dr Fong breaks off when Johnny asks, 'Do you think I'm a fetishist?', instructing him that he must not mention that word. Johnny thinks, *I feel sorry for*

Doc Fong. Professionally he knows he's playing with dynamite, but ... It appears here from Dr Fong's reaction — 'Hell no, Johnny' — that they have rehearsed the conversation before, and that Johnny has been instructed not to introduce psychiatric terminology. But Johnny has grown impatient. Thus from the outset his excessive ambition and arrogance are in evidence. In the opening scene his girlfriend, Cathy, cautions him, 'You're on a hopped-up show-off stage. Get off it!' When, having been admitted to the psychiatric hospital, Johnny is interviewed by Dr Cristo, his inner thoughts reveal his derision of the process: Who am I? — *Dr Cristo, Clinical Director, Head of the medical staff for seven years. Married, two children. Hobby: golf* — Don't you know? — *Now it's time to ask me about voices.*

Walking the hospital corridors, Johnny's inner thoughts again confirm his megalomaniacal motivation: *Ever since my voice changed I've wanted to be in the company of the newspaper greats. And this long corridor is the magic highway to the Pulitzer Prize.* When he asks the inmate Pagliacci about Sloane's death, Pagliacci initially seems to completely disregard Johnny's question — 'I took my time killing my wife' — but then continues, 'Did you know that a man named Sloane, a patient here, was killed with a knife in the kitchen?' Johnny's internal response to this — *He remembered Sloane's murderer. They* do *have flashes of sanity!* — demonstrates that he is concerned with the patients only to the extent that they can assist him in his investigation. Johnny's callous selfishness is in evidence again when, after his frustrated efforts to obtain information from Stuart, he inwardly laments how close he came, only to be frustrated at last by his interlocutor's insanity: *If only Stuart had held on a little longer, another two seconds and I'd have cracked this yarn*.

From the outset there are signs that Johnny has a latent personality disorder. But if there is a turning point, after which he manifests signs of insanity, it is when he first receives electric convulsive therapy. Subsequent to this, when Dr Cristo questions him, Johnny evidences symptoms of sensory-motor deficiency, manifested in temporary intermittent aphasia: *What's the matter with me? Why can't I talk?* This aphasia subsequently becomes a source of humour when he questions Boden, an insane, Noble Prize-winning, American physicist, who draws Johnny's portrait as they speak. Boden's quite rational conversation about his disillusionment with Cold War nuclear physics is juxtaposed with Johnny's inner thoughts, in which he desperately repeats the question which now obsesses him:

> I got fed up with man taking a daily hammer and sickle coated pill of venom... — *If I keep saying it over and over and over in my mind, the words will* have *to jump out of my mouth! "Who killed Sloane in the kitchen?"* — ... I'm a pure scientist ... — *Who killed Sloane in the kitchen?* — ... Let the Russians claim bigger satellites.

Beyond its comic value, this juxtaposition marks the change Johnny has undergone. On the basis of this exchange alone, it is not Boden, but Johnny who appears insane. His entire purpose in life is now distilled to this question — 'Who killed Sloane in the kitchen?' — which, powerless to articulate it, he obsessively repeats in his imagination, regardless of what his interlocutor says; Johnny's excessive ambition now manifests itself in an irrational obsession. When he finally manages to articulate the question, Boden quite matter-of-factly answers, 'Wilks.' His mission finally accomplished, Johnny loses control: upon seeing the portrait, he attacks Boden with

the pad. When the attendants restrain him, Johnny rants about the attendant Wilks killing Sloane. After a further period of sedation and isolation, Dr Cristo asks him,

'Who killed Sloane?'

But Johnny can no longer remember the killer's name. Allowed to walk the hospital corridors once more, Johnny's inner thoughts express his turmoil, *He handed the story to me right on a platter, right on a platter. He gave me the name ... Why can't I think of the name? Name! I can't remember the name of the killer!* Here there is a manifest link between Johnny's inner thoughts and themes of madness. During his tenure in the asylum Johnny becomes insane. But even before his internment, internal monologue reveals his nascent arrogance and over-ambition, a pre-disposition to madness which Cathy had apprehended from the beginning.

Schizophrenia

In *Snake Pit* (Anatole Litvak, 1948), the madness of Virginia Cunningham is established in the opening scene. Sitting on a bench in the grounds of an asylum, she conducts an imaginary conversation with a doctor who is not there. The conversation is punctuated by the insertion of her internal thoughts. The voice of the imaginary doctor is male and comes from offscreen:

'Do you know where you are, Mrs Cunningham?'

Where is he? she thinks. *As if he were crouching behind me...Why am I afraid to look at him?*

'You know, don't you, Mrs Cunningham?'

'In New York, of course. I used to live in Evanston, Illinois, that's where I was born. It's right near Chicago.'

'Did you sleep well last night, Mrs Cunningham? How are you today?'

'Very well, thank you.'

Who is he? And why all these questions, as if he were testing me?

'Do you hear voices?'

'You think I'm deaf? Of course, I hear yours.'

It's hard to keep on being civil when they ask you such naive questions.

Next to her, instead of a doctor she sees another female patient. *He's clever,* she thinks, *but he can't fool me with his magic. It's an old trick, changing into a girl.* When her husband, Robert, visits her and she doubts whether it is him, her internal voice becomes split and there is a dialogue.

'Robert!' she exclaims upon seeing him.

It looks like him, she thinks, *but I must be careful.*

Then another voice cautions, *Watch your step, honey. Everything counts against you.* This voice appears to be the imagined voice of an elder patient she has met in the asylum.

Virginia thinks, *Of course it's not him.*

Robert says, 'Hello.'

It even sounds like him, she thinks.

They can do a good job when they want to, the additional voice intervenes.

In *Snake Pit* internal monologue establishes that Virginia is insane from the outset. Her internal monologue then appears regularly throughout the film, giving expression to her inner experience of various events: when, unfamiliar with her surroundings, she enters the asylum and likens it to a prison; when she is about to receive electro-convulsive therapy; when she is interviewed by a panel of doctors to determine whether or not she is fit to leave the asylum.

Possession

In *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), having murdered his mother and her lover, Norman Bates sustains the illusion that mother is still alive by incorporating her personality into his own. In the final scene, Norman has finally *become* mother. When a policeman brings him a blanket, from offscreen, we hear mother say 'Thank you.' Cut to Norman alone in his cell and, as the camera slowly moves in, the soundtrack chillingly parades Norman's madness, presenting an internal monologue spoken in the voice of mother. Formally, then, amongst all of the examples of internal monologue that we have examined, this one is unique. Internal monologue is the inner voice of the imagining subject, spoken in the first-person form — due to these factors it is perhaps the most penetrating insight cinema can grant into the subjectivity of a character. This is as true of the final scene of *Psycho* as of any other instance of internal monologue, only here, the juxtaposition between body (Norman) and inner voice (mother), this penetrating insight into Norman's deranged psyche, is chilling.[215]

From this brief survey, it is clear that internal monologue often gives expression to the thoughts of characters who are in a state of distress or at a point of crisis. Thus, again, it seems we find here traces of madness in otherwise sane characters. But of the voices which may be present in imagination, one's own voice (internal monologue) is but one.

[215] See Michel Chion's discussion of voices in *Psycho* in *La voix au cinema*, trans. Gorbman, C. (1999), pp.140-50, Columbia University Press.

Internal dialogue

The imagining of imaginary utterances in voices other than one's own must, in a phenomenological sense, be distinguished from recalled voices, which are recollections of actual past utterances.

Pragmatism/Reasoning/Speculating

Imagined voices sometimes perform a pragmatic function, enabling the imagining subject to reach a decision. In the famous sequence of Marion driving the car in *Psycho*, the imagined conversations serve pragmatic ends, enabling Marion to think through the consequences of her action; but finally, there is a hint of malicious fantasy as she almost smiles, imagining Mr Cassidy's reaction upon learning that she has stolen his money.

Anxiety

The three flashbacks in *A Letter to Three Wives* are prompted by the imaginings of the three women, each of whom becomes anxious that it may be her husband who has eloped with Adi Ross, and it is the imagined voice of Adi which expresses these doubts and initiates the flashbacks: (*Is it Brad? Is it Brad? Is it Brad?; Why didn't George go fishing?; Maybe you haven't got everything that you wanted after all …*). A voice without a body, Adi ultimately functions as an enigmatic signifier of the three women's jealous anxiety at the thought of their partners' infidelity.

Guilty conscience

As with various other forms of mental images which we have thus far discussed, imagined voices are often a manifestation of guilty conscience. The presence of more

than one internal voice frequently gives expression to an internal conflict of desires and motives. In *Kipps* (Carol Reed, 1941) the hero, engaged to another, has a tryst with his boyhood sweetheart, following which he conducts an internal dialogue with a voice of conscience. The internal dialogue presents an internal subjective conflict: the whispered voice of conscience speaks in a refined accent, and represents Kipps's newly acquired pretention and sense of duty (he has inherited a large sum of money and has been advised by various friends and relatives to conduct himself accordingly), his ambition to improve himself culturally, to become a gentleman; while the voice which protests innocence and attempts to justify his conduct is Kipps's genuine voice, the working-class cockney accent of the draper's shop-man.

Madness and imagined voices

Telepathy

As with the visions of the psychic, the imagined voices of the telepath are distinguished from those we have considered thus far in that they have a privileged relation to reality; they represent the actual thoughts of characters.[216] In *Scanners* (David Cronenberg, 1980), Cameron involuntarily 'scans' the thoughts of the people in his immediate physical environment. Dr Ruth teaches him to utilise his ability so that he does not merely passively receive unwanted information, but is able to manipulate the thoughts and actions of others. However, Cameron initially experiences his ability as an unwelcome menace. In one scene Ruth conducts an experiment, in which Cameron is strapped to a bed while people file into the room and sit down. As the first few people enter, the soundtrack presents their thoughts,

[216] Like psychic visions, one might question whether or not the imagined voices of the telepath can be classed 'imagination', since the imagining subject is actually able to read other people's thoughts (not merely what he imagines these thoughts might be). But it seems to us that this does not alter their status as mental images.

but as more and more people enter, while no one actually speaks, the voices cumulatively mesh to become a blather of continuous multiple indistinguishable speech-acts, eventually causing Cameron to convulse in an episode of fitting.

Though an image such as this, of a man fitting uncontrollably because of imagined voices, seems to represent madness, the imagined voices of telepaths such as Cameron are rationalised within the verisimilitudinal context of science-fiction. By contrast, in genres with a more naturalistic aesthetic, we find imagined voices which are genuinely imaginary, spontaneous auditory hallucinations, which are unquestionable manifestations of madness.

Auditory hallucination

In *Shock Corridor*, when Johnny is having his portrait sketched by Boden, the insane Noble Prize-winning American physicist, an announcement comes over the hospital public address system, calling 'Dr Hawthorn'. The announcement is repeated several times, and each time, Boden is distracted, but after listening curiously for a moment, resumes his sketch. But then he imagines several successive voices summoning him over the P.A. system: *Dr Boden wanted at the Pentagon — Dr Boden wanted at National Aeronautics and Space Administration — Dr Boden wanted at Newfoundland*.

From the above discussion it is apparent that the experience of imagining voices is common to all sorts of characters, and this is, we believe, evidence of continuity rather than a radical distinction between states of relative sanity and insanity. Characters whom we take to be quite sane — Marion in *Psycho*, for instance —

imagine voices. A manifestation of madness? Perhaps not, though had she not found herself in such a situation, she would probably not have experienced such images. But then other more banal images will take their place, one might object. No doubt. But cinema tends not to represent such banal thoughts. More often we are party to the thoughts of characters who are in some kind of trouble. Distress, danger and anxiety engender mental images in sane characters. Extreme situations give rise to mental images, and these images can thus be understood as traces of madness. The extent to which one is able to control the articulations of imagination is a measure of sanity. But a stagnant imagination, completely lacking in freedom, is redundant. One must allow imagination to wander, allow one's thoughts to be carried by it to some extent if it is to operate effectively, enabling the imagining subject to anticipate the consequences of her actions, make decisions, and adjust her behaviour accordingly. But, accepting the tendency of imagination to assume such licence, we must also recognise that the imagining subject nevertheless remains 'in control', in that she may abruptly terminate her imagining at any point should the exigencies of her physical environment require her to act. But the extent to which imagination remains within the control of the imagining subject is surely determined to some extent by the vicissitudes of her specific situation. In a given set of circumstances, anxiety, paranoia even, may be a rational response. Thus the specific demands of a situation may impose an abnormal rate of imaginative activity upon — and hence reveal traces of madness in — a subject who would otherwise be considered sane. Thus the mad subject suffers from abnormal or excessive functions of an instrument which the sane person shares with her: namely, imagination. Over the next three chapters we explore filmic representations of the major forms of imagination, commencing with fantasy.

Chapter 5. Fantasy

The phenomenology of daydreaming

In his critique of Alain's theory of the image in *Imagination: A Psychological Critique*, Sartre makes some important points about the status of the image and the subject's awareness of it. According to Sartre, the basis of Alain's theory is judgement. Alain 'viewed imagination as belief in a false object', thus as judgement Alain's image 'involves in its very nature an assertion of existence'.[217] The imaginary world is therefore a world of deception: 'Imagination appears as a succession of momentary little dreams followed by rude awakenings [...] Either one is *in* the imaginative act, and we *perceive falsely*. Or else we wake up'.[218] This is fine, Sartre says, for conscious perceptions and dreams, but what about fantasy?

> A man who goes off into a dream tells himself stories *which he does not believe*, yet which are something other than mere abstract judgements. Here is a kind of assertion, a type of existence midway between the false assertions of dreams and the certitudes of waking life, a type of existence which is evidently that of imaginary creations. To make judgemental acts of these is to attribute too much to them. But also it is to attribute too little to them.[219]

Having thus identified the fundamental weakness of Alain's theory, Sartre goes on to state his own position:

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[217] Sartre, J-P. (1936) *Imagination: A Psychological Critique*, trans. Williams, F., Michigan: Ann Arbor, p.124

[218] *Ibid*., Sartre's emphases

[219] *Ibid.*, p.125, Sartre's emphasis

> When I evoke the image of my friend Peter [...] Peter *appears to me* […] *in image*. Doubtless I must shift to reflection to formulate the judgement, 'I have an image of Peter,' directing my attention not to the object of the image but to the image itself as a psychic reality. But this shift to reflection in no way alters the positional quality of the image. I do not wake up, I do not right myself, I do not suddenly *discover* that I formed an image. Quite the contrary, the moment I make the assertion, 'I have an image of Peter', I realise that *I knew all along it was an image*. Only I knew it in a different fashion, for this knowledge was one with the act by which I constituted Peter in image.[220]

Unlike the dreamer, the imagining subject is able to make a reflective judgement, so that he knows he is imagining. As Roland Barthes explains in declaring his preference for fantasy over dream, fantasy 'remains concomitant to the consciousness of reality'.[221]

Fantasy in *L'Education sentimentale*

Cinema's fantasy sequences have antecedents in literature. In *L'Education sentimentale*, Gustav Flaubert's chiselled style lends many of his descriptions of imagination a realism of psychic temporality — that is, he manages to convey something of the reality of the temporal experience of imagination. If we consider that, amongst the earliest film theorists, Hugo Münsterberg championed cinema, arguing its superiority over existing art forms — particularly theatre — on the basis of

[220] *Ibid*., Sartre's emphases

[221] Barthes, R. (1975) *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, Berkeley: University of California Press., p.88

film's capacity to depict mental subjectivity,[222] if we consider, that is, that from the beginning, cinema, by force of its specific technological form, represented something of a zenith-point in the effort to convey mental subjectivity (of which imagination is a significant element), then we can understand Flaubert's depictions of imagination as anticipating the matter-of-fact movement into fantasy in the cinema of, for instance, Fellini or Oshima.

There are two significant grammatical aspects by which Frédéric's acts of imagination are distinguished from cinematic depictions of imagination. Firstly, written in the past tense, the novel describes Frédéric's imaginings as past events. Narrative cinema, by contrast, seems to unfold in a historical-present — it presents putative past events as though they were occurring in the present. Thus, filmic representations of imagination have an immediacy which is lacking in Flaubert's descriptions. Secondly, written in the third-person form, Frédéric's acts of imagination are therefore also presented at this remove. By contrast, depictions of imagination are one aspect in which cinema often momentarily assumes a first-person mode of narration. Nevertheless, the brevity, the terseness of Flaubert's articulation of some of Frédéric's acts of imagination, cannot but remind one of cinematic depictions of imagination in certain modern auteurs. For instance, when he chats on the terrace with M. Dambreuse about his career:

> Was he thinking of asking him to be an associate in any of his own undertakings?

[222] See *Hugo Münsterberg on Film*, pp.179-88

> The young man saw, as by a lightning flash, an enormous fortune coming into his hands.
>
> 'Let's go in again,' said the banker.[223]

Or, when alone, Frédéric prepares himself psychologically for a duel with Cissy, his thoughts become increasingly sombre, and he is resolved to die:

> ' ... Yes, I shall be killed.'
>
> And, suddenly, he saw his mother, in a black dress; incoherent images floated through his mind. His own cowardice exasperated him.[224]

In this last, we have a morbid thought presented in the present tense, as in internal monologue. There follows a visual mental image which realises this morbid thought; and finally, a description of Frédéric's reflection on his cowardice. Depictions as terse as this resemble unheralded flashes of imagination in modern cinema, as, for instance, when Guido fantasises about executing his script-advisor in *8 ½*, or when Wakizaka hallucinates twice in quick succession, imagining he sees Shoko, in *Pleasures of the Flesh* (Nagisa Oshima, 1965).

Form

Fantasy circuit

In classical cinema, transition into fantasy is often preceded by a zoom in on the imagining subject, a nondiegetic music cue and a formal flourish such as a dissolve.

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[223] Flaubert, G. (2003) *L'Education Sentimentale*, trans. Tooke, A., Hertfordshire: Wordsworth., p.173

[224] *Ibid*., p.240

Fantasy circuit and modern cinema

Modern cinema frequently shuns such a legible signalling, entering fantasy via a simple cut, so that often one only registers the transition after the fact. In *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch, 2001), soon after waking from her long sleep, Diane experiences a brief waking fantasy. She turns to her left, and an expression of glorious relief comes over her as she sees Camilla (who in the dream was Rita), wearing a red dress, smiling at her: 'You've come back!' Diane says joyfully. But a look of horror then descends over her features. When we then cut to Diane looking more calm and pensive, it is clear that this is the present and that the exchange with Camilla was imaginary.[225] Not only is the transition into imagination here completely unheralded, but Lynch compounds confusion by making the Diane of the fantasy virtually indistinguishable from the Diane of the present (dishevelled, wearing her dressing gown).

While disruptions of the signifying chain through the omission of the opening parenthetic shot can create confusion (we momentarily mistake imagination for reality), the implications of the partial or complete omission of the closing parenthesis are less significant. Where the resolving shot is partially omitted, upon returning to the present we find that there has been a temporal ellipse, the duration of which is indeterminable, but remains within logical parameters. Where the closing parenthesis is completely omitted, we pass directly from the fantasy to a new present which is different from that which was the point of departure, the fantasy sequence thus acting as a transition, as in *8 ½*. In both cases, the imaginative act is deprived of the intensity of a tangible relation to the temporality of the present.

[225] It is possible that the sequence represents a memory, but it seems more likely — given what we subsequently learn of Camilla's attitude towards Diane — that it is a fantasy.

In *Belle de jour*, after her humiliating meeting with Husson in the brothel, clearly distraught that she has been discovered, the camera moves in toward Séverine from behind. A fantasy sequence emerges, in which Pierre defeats Husson in a duel in the woods. When we return to the present, Séverine exits her room and Madame Anaïs asks, 'Has he gone already?' Here, though the point of the fantasy's return is roughly consistent with its point of departure, since neither the opening nor the closing parentheses of the circuit show Séverine's face, the fantasy appears at a remove from her consciousness; the fact of Séverine's *experience* of the fantasy is notably de-emphasised. The looser the circuit bracketing, the more removed are the mental images from the imagining subject, the more autonomous the sequence becomes.

In some cases, despite the omission of the opening parenthetic shot, the sequence is immediately recognisable as fantasy. In the first scene of *The King of Comedy* (Martin Scorsese, 1982), Rupert Pupkin shields talk show host, Jerry Langford, from a mob of enthusiasts, and in the confusion manages to gain entrance to his limousine. Rupert is bleeding, and so Jerry offers him his handkerchief. As they drive, Rupert pitches some of his awful stand-up act to Jerry, who is unimpressed, and politely advises him to contact his assistant. When they arrive at the hotel and Jerry finally escapes him, Rupert looks at the blood-stained handkerchief with Jerry's initials on it. Cut to a new scene in which, over lunch, Jerry begs Rupert to take over his show for six weeks. Though there is no explicit formal coding to mark the passage into fantasy, the sequence is nevertheless immediately recognisable as such purely from the extent to which it contradicts the narrative situation hitherto established. (At this stage, having recognised the sequence as fantasy, we might understand the ground of

the fantasy, its point of departure, as Rupert standing outside the hotel staring at Jerry's handkerchief.) As Jerry persists in his request, Rupert becomes increasingly melodramatic in his refusal. When we then cut to the reality of the situation, in which Rupert, now quite animated, is alone in his bedroom, rehearsing an imaginary conversation with Jerry, we understand that this new present is the ground from which the fantasy is elaborated. Between Rupert looking at Jerry's handkerchief and this new present, there is a temporal ellipse. Here then, it is the omission of the opening parenthesis rather than the closing parenthesis of the circuit which enables the fantasy to constitute a bridge between separate presents. As the fantasy continues, we pass back and forth between Rupert alone in the present and the fantasy scene in the restaurant. Scorsese's presentation of this scene differs from typical representations of fantasy, since here Rupert does not merely imagine the scene, but actually rehearses it. Having omitted the opening parenthesis of the circuit, in order to establish that the scene is not simply imagined but rehearsed, Scorsese reveals the situation in the present. Once this has been established, the effect of the continued intercutting between the fantasy and reality is comic, emphasising the disparity between Rupert's real life and the utopia of his fantasy.

Asynchrony

It is uncommon for a fantasy to consist purely of sound, but occasionally the imaginative element is solely image. For instance, in *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971) Alex listens to his favourite music, Beethoven's 'Ninth Symphony'. While his voiceover describes the rapture the music induces in him, we see images of his imagination: a girl being hung, natural disasters. Thus Alex's mental images are represented on the image track, while the music issues from an actual source in the

present. But this sequence seems to differ from the examples of 'asynchrony' we examined in Part I, in that here the present does not only present the sensory impressions experienced simultaneous with imagination, but here (music) engenders and at each moment perpetuates the simultaneous (visual) mental images.

Simultaneous co-existent orders

In *Kipps*, present and fantasy world are presented simultaneously within the same shot. At his woodwork class Kipps gazes longingly at his teacher Miss Walshingham. The fantasy commences with an objective shot: while Kipps remains static, another version of himself, a hologram-like limpid figure, emerges from his body. We then cut to a subjective imaginary point-of-view shot, as Kipps watches his irreal self approach the teacher. As the irreal Kipps speaks to Miss Walshingham we cut back and forth between the fantasy and shots of the imagining Kipps of the present. The irreal Kipps declares his love for Miss Walshingham, but she remains oblivious to his presence — because they each exist in distinct orders. The irreal Kipps is about to leave, when the fantasy reaches a turning-point: a reciprocal irreal hologram-like Miss Walshingham emerges from the real Miss Walshingham and calls (the irreal) Kipps back. Particularly interesting here is the fact that the fantasy world does not entirely overwhelm the present. Throughout the fantasy we regularly return to the present in the shots of (the real) Kipps watching (imagining) the progress of his fantasy. But apart from this intercutting, in the first half of the fantasy, when the irreal Kipps declares his love for the real Miss Walshingham of the present and she remains oblivious to his presence, we have a co-existence of the real (Miss Walshingham) and the irreal (imaginary Kipps) within the same shot. Kipps's perception of the oblivious Miss Walshingham of the present and his mental images of his irreal self coexist in

point-of-view shots which combine perception and imagination. In representations such as this, cinema clearly contradicts Sartre's dictum on the mutual exclusivity of perception and imagination.[226]

Contingencies of the present

We will see in Chapters 6 and 7 that the exigencies of the imagining subject's situation and physical environment can find means of expression in hallucinations and, in distorted form, in dreams. This is also true of some fantasies. Some aspect of the physical environment of the present becomes incorporated into the fantasy.

While the majority of fantasies are triggered by a spark in the present, as they develop, most fantasies — though they may be peopled by those in the imagining subject's life, and give expression to her obsessions — constitute, and are defined as such by, a definite severance from the present situation. By contrast, there are others which emerge from and are developed through present perception, but which are distinguished from misperceptions and hallucinations inasmuch as they are deliberately willed psychological deceptions. In *Natural Born Killers*, Mallory's fantasy of Mickey at the petrol station is parasitic upon the petrol pump attendant, whom she imagines is Mickey. She knows that the man filling up her car is a stranger, yet she knowingly and deliberately imagines that he is Mickey in order to become aroused.

We have already seen that, in *Subida al cielo*, Oliverio is tormented by the solicitations of loose woman, Raquel, on the bus en route to Patalan, where he plans

[226] *L'Imaginaire*, p.120

to hire a lawyer so that his dying mother can make a will. From the outset Oliverio nobly rejects her advances, but Raquel persists and his resistance weakens. She dangles before him a stringy children's toy and then offers him a bite of her apple. Oliverio takes a bite and regards her sensually. As he faces forward, chewing the apple, an erotic fantasy sequence emerges. Of all the fantasies we discuss in this chapter, this one, with its various surreal elements, most resembles a dream. Several aspects of the situation in the present find expression in the fantasy. When he ends his embrace with Raquel, the string which Oliverio finds dangling from his mouth is that which Raquel had just a few moments earlier dangled before him in the present. He follows this string and it leads him to his mother, who is seated on a plinth. This symbolism establishes associations between sex and death, and anticipates the fact that Oliverio's desire for Raquel will become associated with his mother's death, when he learns that he 'just missed' his mother, after submitting to Raquel's temptation. Also, the presence of the animals in the fantasy — the herd of goats that interrupt Oliverio and Raquel's embrace, the man carrying a sheep over his shoulders — is explained when we return to the present where Oliverio fondles a sheep which is sitting on his lap.

Having discussed some formal aspects, we will now consider the functions of filmic representations of fantasy.

Function

Anxiety

Of course the prime function of fantasy is wish-fulfilment, but some waking fantasies give expression to anxieties, the imagining subject extrapolating a nightmare scenario

from a present situation. In *La guerre est finie*, Diego arrives home carrying the suitcase he is looking after for the young revolutionary, Nadine, to find his wife Marianne and her friends working. Upon entering, particularly nervous and furtive because uncertain of the contents of the suitcase and because he fears Nadine may have inadvertently led the police to him, he encounters a woman he does not recognise. The previous evening Diego became impatient with the inquisitive probing questions of Marianne's colleague, Agnès. Now, as he enters the room, Agnès is retrieving some papers from a bookcase. Immediately she remarks that his suitcase looks heavy, and jokingly asks what is in it. Diego asks who the woman he passed in the hall was. 'Lola,' Marianne explains. As Diego enters his room, the photographer Bill accosts him, saying, 'I wanted to say, about last night – Well, if I can ever be of help. A photographer gets around, you know. That's all. I'm sure Agnès must be mad with curiosity.' The allusion to the scene of the previous evening, the mentioning of Agnès's curiosity, though no doubt quite innocent, are nevertheless equivocal, and the insert of mental images, which soon follows, reveals how Bill's words, the presence of a stranger — Lola — in his home, and his lingering unease with Agnès, prompt Diego to compose momentary paranoid scenarios. Now alone, he carefully opens Nadine's suitcase and finds that it contains explosives. Her colleagues now departed, Marianne forwards a message to Diego: he is to meet Juan in Barcelona after all. A rapid succession of inserts follows: Agnès appears from beneath the bed and carefully opens the suitcase. In the present, Diego asks, 'He didn't say why I'm going?' while the mental images continue with a shot of Lola getting the suitcase from a top shelf. Here then, Diego's existing suspicion of Agnès combines with his nervous attitude (caused by the suitcase, the police and Nadine) and suspicious impressions upon entering his house (the stranger in the hall, Agnès's

unwelcome questions, Bill's equivocal comment). Though it is extravagant, this nightmarish imaginary scenario involving Agnès is a reasonable product of the circumspection necessary for a man in Diego's position: in their first meeting Agnès asked awkward questions; when he enters the room trembling with nerves, she immediately draws attention to the contents of his suitcase; Bill then mentions Agnès's 'curiosity'. On the other hand, the image of Lola demonstrates how, from a mesh of impressions of the recent and immediate past, Diego composes a confused imaginary scenario, a symptom of paranoia. He does not mistake what he sees, but extrapolates from these recent memories an alternative, exaggerated nightmarish scenario, in which the protagonists exchange roles. In the present, Diego sees Agnès reach for the top shelf to retrieve a file, but he imagines Lola in an identical attitude, retrieving not a file, but his suitcase. Diego has no grounds to suspect Lola of anything; his suspicion of Agnès is here displaced to Lola, simply because he was alarmed to encounter her, a stranger, upon returning to his house in this anxious state.

Wish-fulfilment

As we have said, the majority of fantasies are wish-fulfilling, but of course the content of a wish-fulfilling fantasy depends on the specific personality traits, obsessions and desires of the individual imagining subject. By far the most common form of wish-fulfilling imaginary scenario is the erotic fantasy, but we will first consider some others.

<u>Freedom</u>

We saw in our discussion of asynchronous representations of imagination (Chapter 3) that twice in *The Pianist* the hero mimics the action of playing the piano, while the

soundtrack presents his mental images of the music which would issue were he to actually play it. The Jewish pianist spends much time on the run, in hiding from the Nazis, reliant on the benevolence of others for sanctuary. When he finds himself before a piano it is clear that there is no question of him playing it, since this may draw unwanted attention. The function of fantasy here is to indulge an impossible pleasure. The pianist manages, by the power of imagination alone, to temporarily or partially placate, to momentarily escape, the anxiety and nausea of his situation. Here, mental images function as a temporary antidote to and an escape from the exigencies of an impossible reality.

Redemption

In *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*, we learn through a flashback that Jack is plagued by guilt over an incident from his adolescence, when he allowed his brother to be publicly humiliated by his school peers in an initiation rite. The brother was a talented singer; the other boys stripped him to his waist and ordered him to sing. After this he never sang again. Subsequent to this flashback anecdote, the new General at the prisoner-of-war camp buries Jack up to his neck as punishment for creating disorder. At night, the camera moves in towards Jack's head and we enter a fantasy sequence in which Jack is reconciled with his younger brother, whom he encounters in the garden of their childhood. Most interesting here is that Jack appears in his military uniform, a grown man, while his brother remains a child, the same age he was in the flashback. It is as though, as a consequence of the burden of his guilt, Jack's image of his brother has remained frozen at the traumatic point of his

betrayal.[227] Jack apologises, but his brother seems unconcerned; then, significantly, he sings. Thus this imaginary exchange appears to offer Jack — now dying, helpless to effect any such actual reconciliation — the only form of catharsis, the only reprieve from guilt he will realise: an imaginary one.

Serenity

We saw in Chapter 2 how at the point of death characters sometimes replay significant episodes from their past. The moment of death can also engender wish-fulfilling fantasy scenes. In *Carlito's Way* (Brian De Palma, 1993), Carlito's objective throughout is to earn the money he needs to start up a business in the Bahamas and escape his life as a gangster. At the end of the film, just as he is about to catch the train to the airport, he is shot in a revenge attack. As he is stretchered across the train platform, the soundtrack presents his thoughts in a calm and philosophical internal monologue. He is sure that Gale will make a good mother. He accepts that he is dying and will not realise his dream. Then the 'Escape to Paradise' travel advertisement placard, which clearly symbolises his dream of escaping the criminal world, comes alive: the woman whose silhouette appears against the reflection of the setting sun on the tropical sea is Gale, dancing on the beach to the (unheard) music of three musicians. Over these images Carlito thinks, *Can't come with me on this trip though. Gettin' the shakes now, last call for drinks, bar's closin' down. Sun's up. Where we go for breakfast?* Thus these mental images seem to offer Carlito catharsis. They represent a utopian vision of the dream which he can no longer realise; at the same time they seem to represent a vision of the afterlife.

[227] Such irreal or impossible features of imagination are typically the province of dreams, and given Jack's predicament — buried up to his neck and dying of thirst — it may be that this sequence represents a delirious state somewhere between waking fantasy and the dream proper.

Imagination here condenses Carlito's lament for a lost dream and his calm acceptance of death in a utopian image which tempers the tragic dénouement.

Avarice

We find an early fantasy sequence in *Greed* (Erich von Stroheim, 1925). The dentist, McTeague, marries Trina, but soon finds that she is obsessed with accumulating and hoarding money. In one scene Trina informs McTeague that his mother has written requesting $50. She remarks, 'I wonder if Mommer thinks we're millionaires ... Fifty dollars is fifty dollars.' McTeague reminds Trina that she has five thousand dollars. As he goes to sleep, Trina sneaks over to his bedside, takes money from his coat pocket, and puts it away in her drawer. An intertitle, which seems to represent Trina's thoughts rather than words spoken aloud, explains: 'If Mommer really needs the money so badly ... she'll write again.' Cut back to Trina stroking her hands avariciously. An iris-close fixes momentarily on her hands, before a fantasy image emerges, of a pair of emaciated arms, hands fetishistically handling piles of gold. The fact that the arms are so unhealthily thin suggests that Trina will happily allow her physical health to degenerate for the sake of hoarding more money. Later, when McTeague loses his job, Trina empties his pockets of his last wages and impatiently sends him out to seek work. McTeague requests money for the streetcar because he has far to go and it is going to rain, but Trina refuses. He sets off into the rain, while Trina remains indoors and a fantasy emerges, presenting two pairs of hands retrieving gold treasure. A subsequent intertitle explains of Trina: 'Gold was her master ... a passion with her, a mania, a veritable mental disease.' While Trina is miserly and fetishises gold, we find other characters whose ambition is unrelated to money.

Ambition

In *The King of Comedy*, convinced that he is a gifted comedian, Rupert Pupkin desperately craves the fame which he feels his talent merits. He resolves to enter show business at the top, certain that Jerry Langford will offer him a big break. After delivering a demo recording to Jerry's assistant, Miss Long, Rupert fantasises, concocting an idealised anticipation of his meeting with Jerry. Jerry has listened to the tape and he praises Rupert effusively. He invites Rupert to his house for the weekend to work on some material, and assures him that he can bring his girlfriend along. On the basis of this imaginary conversation, Rupert invites his friend Rita to Jerry's for the weekend. Upon arriving, Rupert behaves as though he really were Jerry's friend, as if his imaginary conversation with Jerry had actually taken place.

Subsequently, while he awaits Miss Long in the reception area, Rupert imagines that he is a guest on Jerry's show. His old high school principal, George Kapp, appears as a mystery guest, and announces that he will marry Rupert and Rita live on television. But he first embarks on a monologue, which evidences the idiosyncrasies of Rupert's imaginative life. Not content with his televised wedding to Rita, Rupert's fantasy demands that Kapp first deliver a formal apology on behalf of his high school for their failure to recognise his talent. Kapp then assures viewers that Rupert and Rita will be married after the advertisement, and we return to the present as Miss Long arrives and politely advises Rupert to work on his act in New York's comedy clubs.

The content of Rupert's fantasies, and their juxtaposition with the events of the present, functions to ironically emphasise the gulf between the facts of his reality and the utopia of his imaginary life. *The King of Comedy* is a black comedy and from it

we cannot extrapolate hypotheses about the role of fantasy in criminal psychology. Nevertheless, in the film fantasy is hugely significant. Rupert's imaginary life is so powerful that it comes to determine his behaviour in the real world. The film does not concern itself with the question of Rupert's mental health status. In fact, the denouement, in which, having been released from prison after three years, the irrepressible Rupert promotes his best-selling autobiography, suggests that his drastic action was not necessarily entirely irrational. Desperate for fame, he kidnaps a talk-show host in order to secure a ten minute television slot for his stand-up routine; his act is broadcast. Though his routine is terrible, Rupert nevertheless attains fame, purely as a consequence of the extreme lengths to which he went in order to realise his ambition.

Misogyny

In *8 ½*, Guido finds himself in an awkward situation when his mistress Carla appears while he is at breakfast with his wife, Luisa. Guido escapes this impossible scene by conjuring a fantasy. Carla suddenly bursts into song; Luisa introduces herself to her husband's mistress and, without the slightest hint of malice, compliments her on her voice. (The governing logic of the fantasy is: 'if only my wife and mistress could get along like this …') This sequence engenders Guido's large-scale misogynist fantasy of a harem peopled by all the women of his life, past and present. Luisa appears, attired as his mother was in his childhood.[228] Guido's position in the fantasy (centre-of-attention in a society of women), in referencing the previous flashback in which the young Guido and his siblings were bathed, expresses a regressive desire to return to the blissful plenitude of childhood, a time during which the women in his life seemed

[228] In the dream sequence with which the film opens, Guido's mother becomes Luisa while he is kissing her.

to exist purely in order to service and comfort him. Clearly such a scenario lies outrageously outside the realm of the possible. In her article, 'Fantasy, Imagination, and Film', Kathleen Stock writes:

> Fantasising is aimed, not at actual truth, nor at possible truth, but at being a substitute for states of affairs that would gratify. To that end, there is no penalty, in terms of the fantasy's guiding aim, if it represents states of affairs in combinations which, in reality, the subject recognises as incompatible.[229]

But the fact that Guido's fantasy is misogynist does not make him a misogynist. Later Stock writes,

> the content of a fantasy about S is at least negatively responsive to what the fantasist *would find pleasurable* with respect to S's occurrence, so that his fantasy is isolated from inferential transactions with those beliefs which would entail or imply something about S which would inhibit a pleasurable response, were it the case…an agent's fantasies about S tend to be isolated from inferential transactions with beliefs he has that S is morally objectionable.[230]

Thus Guido's harem fantasy is divorced from, or excludes, the knowledge that in reality such a situation would be morally objectionable. Subsequently, Stock introduces the hypothetical fantasist John, who has a fantasy about having sexual intercourse with a woman by force. Her description of John's treatment of the

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[229] Stock, K. (2009) 'Fantasy, Imagination, and Film', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 49, No. 4, (October 2009), p.363

[230] *Ibid*., p.365

morally objectionable aspect of his fantasy is instructive in our understanding of Guido's fantasy:

> John seeks, in his fantasy, to objectually imagine the occurrence of what he desires in a way that somehow prevents reflection upon its morally objectionable aspect. He is unlikely to be able to do so by straightforwardly removing from the fantasy those determinate aspects he finds morally wrong; for these are likely to be the *very same aspects he finds exciting and pleasurable*…instead, he imaginatively treats the determinates of what he desires as either: (A) immune from moral determinables (e.g. *wrong, harmful*) which he would ordinarily think of as justifiably applied to them; or (B) presented in combination with other moral determinables (e.g. *neutral, beneficial*) in a way he judges (at least, when not fantasising) to be unwarranted.[231]

Guido's utopian fantasy is threatened when an ageing actress complains about being banished upstairs because she is too old. Guido's unshakeable resolve in the face of her appeal precipitates insurrection, before he restores order with his whip, this wielding of authority clearly expressive of his desire to control things as director. Conti and McCormach interpret Fellini's film in terms of Jungian psychology.[232] They rightly observe that Guido is at a point of crisis in his life.

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[231] *Ibid*., Stock's emphasis

[232] Conti, I & W.A. McCormach (1984) 'Federico Fellini: Artist in Search of Self', *Biography*, Volume 7, No. 4, Fall 1984, University of Hawai'i Press, 292-308

> On one side there is the realm of light, youth and pleasure to which Guido's childhood nurses, Saraghina [...] Carla, all belong. Pitted against these characters is a world of darkness, death, and fear to which the Cardinal, Guido's mother, the priests and Daumier are aligned. These two themes are perceived as mutually exclusive by Guido. His crisis is rooted in his inability to overcome this duality.[233]

We might add to the former group Mezzabotta, who has left his wife for an attractive young lady, and to the latter group Guido's wife, Luisa. Guido is torn between Luisa and his mistress Carla, between the responsibilities of marriage and the regressive pleasure that a relationship with Carla represents. In his fantasy, we see how Guido struggles to resolve this inner conflict. The women's rebellion 'can be seen as symbolising the conflict between reluctance to abandon youth and the desire to accept maturity.'[234]

The sequence ends with Luisa dutifully scrubbing the floor, whilst addressing a monologue to Guido (now absent from the scene), in which she insists that she enjoys living communally with the other women and expresses regret that it has taken her twenty years of marriage to discover how to behave appropriately as his wife. Thus the fantasy — after its elaborate departures from real life — concludes with explicit reference to the real-life situation from which it initially arose: the triangle of tension between Guido, Luisa, and Carla. As we dissolve to the present, Guido laments to himself, 'Just a little more patience, Luisa; but perhaps you can't anymore.' Here, then, the fantasy is not merely an inconsequential idle conjuring, but functions to help

[233] *Ibid.*, pp.302-03

[234] *Ibid*., p.304

Guido to reach a point where he can move towards resolving the tension between his desire for his wife and his desire for his mistress: the act of reducing Luisa to a fawning, complaisant, dutiful and submissive wife in his fantasy enables Guido to recognise how badly he has treated her and to appreciate her more.

Romance

There are some fantasies which are better described as romantic than erotic. Between rounds during the boxing match in *City Lights* (Charles Chaplin, 1931), the tramp mistakes his trainer for his blind girlfriend. This is a case of misperception induced by his concussion, but here misperception takes the form of fantasy. He might have mistaken his trainer for anyone, but he doesn't; he creates a fantasy image. The effect is comic precisely because the misperception has the utopian impulse of fantasy.

Erotic

The majority of cinema's representations of fantasy are erotic, but under this broad heading there are many varieties. In the fantasy sequence from *Subida al cielo,* Raquel, Oliverio's wife Albina and his mother all have prominent roles. The fantasy is structured around an opposition between Raquel and Albina. Oliverio's imagination swings back and forth between a sexual encounter with Raquel and his duty towards Albina. He and Raquel are alone on the bus, which continues on its way though there is no driver. The bus is full of jungle foliage and Raquel strips down to a swimming costume. She beckons Oliverio to the back of the bus and they embrace. Outside, the driver and several other passengers form a brass band, providing the fantasy with a musical accompaniment (the bus now appears to be stationary). Meanwhile, Albina rises out of a river in her wedding dress and chases Oliverio along

the riverbank; he turns and pushes her into the river. As Albina leaves the riverside, looking weary and dejected, Oliverio hastens to her and embraces her tightly. Though she appears tired and upset, she accepts his gesture and it seems they are reconciled. However, when they emerge from their embrace, Oliverio finds that he has been kissing not Albina but Raquel. She sticks her tongue out and laughs wickedly. Now she winks at Oliverio as she rises out of the water, wearing Albina's wedding dress. In the manner of a dream, Oliverio's surrealistic fantasy gives expression to his conflicting internal desires, a battle between libido and repression. In other cases there is no such internal conflict; the erotic fantasy is free of any sense of guilt.

A Clockwork Orange presents several brief, but significant, fantasies. First, there is the scene in which listening to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony conjures for Alex images of natural disasters. Already familiar with the mindless criminal violence of Alex and his friends, our misgivings about his character are exacerbated and intensified by this subjective insight into his malevolent imagination. Later, over images of Alex in the prison library, his voiceover explains that the prison pastor has become fond of him since he began studying the Bible. Alex's enthusiastic interpretations of scenes from the Old Testament are accompanied by representations of his imagination which situate him within the historical scenes: he is pampered by scantily clad beautiful women, and participates in the torture of Christ on his way to Calvary. The effect is ironic and mildly humorous: while the pastor imagines Alex has discovered religious faith, he is in fact finding vicarious consolation through the Bible for sexual and sadistic pleasures which he is no longer free to indulge in reality. Alex is subsequently selected to be the subject of a government experiment aimed at controlling prison numbers by exposing offenders to a scientific cure treatment which

guarantees that they will never re-offend. The treatment leaves Alex physically incapable, not only of committing crime, but of experiencing pleasure, and even of defending himself from violence, because of a chemical reaction that makes him physically ill. By an unfortunate coincidence Alex experiences the same dreadful sickness whenever he hears Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; and it is being unable to escape this music that ultimately drives him to attempt suicide. In the epilogue, when the Minister of the Interior visits him in hospital and presents him with the surprise gift of a performance of Beethoven's Ninth through a powerful sound system, Alex manifests no unpleasant symptoms, thus demonstrating that he is cured. The film's final shot, a mental image inspired by the music, presents slow-motion images of Alex copulating with a topless woman. Thus the Ninth conjures the same sort of images as Alex experienced before his cure (when he fantasised about Biblical scenes, for instance), but — and Kubrick distils Burgess's moral standpoint to this difference — their meaning is no longer the same. In contrast to the previous fantasy — which, with the voiceover, ironically revealed that, rather than being religiously rehabilitated, Alex was indulging profane sadistic fantasies (the mental images, therefore, evidence of a deviant, incurably criminal mind) — these (equally erotic) images are proof of Alex's mental well-being: he is cured.

In *Memorias del Subdesarrollo*, Sergio's young and attractive maid's description of her baptism inspires in him a fantasy, in which the maid's baptism becomes a utopian sexual initiation rite. Upon returning to the present, we find Sergio examining a printed reproduction of a female nude. As the maid goes about her business, Sergio continues to fantasise. Shedding the pretext of the baptism, he now simply imagines going to bed with her. These are the frivolous imaginings of an idle, bored bourgeois.

While Sergio is the film's protagonist, he is not an entirely sympathetic character. This is evidenced in his relationship with Elena, whom he pursues and seduces before rejecting, finding her to be primitive, typical of the backwardness of Cuban people, not cultured enough, not western enough, not sufficiently responsive — or capable of responding — to his efforts to change her. Neither can the maid be a suitable partner for Sergio: he would soon become bored with her and find her, like Elena, to be irremediably inadequate. Stock writes, 'the content of a fantasy about a situation S is guided by what the fantasist anticipates would be pleasurable in S, at least in the negative sense that its content excludes what would inhibit pleasure, or be positively displeasurable.'[235] Thus Sergio's supposition — which prevents him from making advances to her in reality — that the maid is culturally inferior to him, is omitted from the fantasy, the sparse elements of which express the utopian yearning of imagination. He imagines an uncomplicated sexual bliss with the maid, which he is aware is impracticable. As is clear from his conquest of Elena, Sergio is quite willing to pursue women whom he finds attractive. But Elena disappoints him ('I'd expected more of her. I thought she'd be complex and interesting'). Sergio projects qualities (in this case, 'culture') upon Elena, which he subsequently finds that she lacks, and is perhaps, in his opinion, incapable of attaining. The situation with the maid is slightly different, since from the outset Sergio is aware of her profession, her social standing and her cultural inferiority, or 'underdevelopment'. His fantasies of a sexual union with the maid are therefore frivolous; the fantasy aims at transcending the social differences between them (which are, as far as Sergio is concerned, and as the Elena episode demonstrates, intractable). If Sergio seriously imagined he could find meaningful happiness with the maid, he would make an advance. Since he feels that

[235] Stock, K. (2009) 'Fantasy, Imagination, and Film,' p.362

happiness with a woman who is so socially and culturally inferior to him is impossible, he settles for a momentary image of happiness, an idealistic utopian vision of contentment and uncomplicated satisfaction which is imaginary.

Some films present the imagining subject as lecherous. We find such characters in the early surrealist films of Buñuel. In *Un Chien Andalou* (1928) the man feels the woman's breasts. At first she resists, pushing him away, but then remains where she is and lowers her guard. He feels her breasts again and a series of dissolves reveal that while he feels her breasts through her clothes, he imagines that his hands are touching the flesh of her naked body, and then that he is feeling not her breasts but her buttocks. In *L'Âge d'Or* (Luis Buñuel, 1931) the man's character is barely developed at all in any conventional sense. His overriding characteristic is an insatiable sexual desire, and apart from his lecherous behaviour, this desire is expressed through subjective fantasy. He has three fantasies involving the woman who is the subject of his frustrated affections: first, when they are parted in the mud at the start, he forms an image of the woman with a yearning, sensual expression on her face, whilst sitting in a bathroom. His next — and most lecherous — fantasy comes when he is escorted through the streets by two guards, and stops at an advertisement which shows a female hand with the middle- and fore-fingers depressed over a black surface. Adjacent to the hand is a hat. As he gazes at the picture it comes to life: the hand becomes that of a woman masturbating, the hat a patch of pubic hair. The final fantasy occurs when he brings the guards to a halt at a shop window, where he admires the photograph of a model posing. From the photographic image we dissolve to an image of the real-life beautiful woman in the same pose, breathing deeply and

closing her eyes as though awaiting a sexual encounter. More powerful than Sergio's idle erotic imaginings, these are images of pure desire.

Cinematic representations of sexual fantasies are predominantly those of heterosexual men. Occasionally, however, we see the fantasies of women. The fantasy sequence which opens *Belle de Jour* establishes that Séverine is a masochist. She is riding in a landau with her husband Pierre. After a disagreement, Pierre stops the landau and observes as, on his orders, the drivers conduct Séverine into the woods, tie her to a tree and flagellate her. As the driver prepares to take her, Pierre's voice intrudes from the present and the fantasy is abruptly curtailed. Séverine to some extent stands apart from many of the other fantasists here discussed, not only because she is a masochist, but because her boredom and curiosity are so great that she rejects the mundane passivity of her reality; at Madame Anaïs's she realises her fantasies, but finds herself trapped between her desire for pleasure — though, for her, concomitant with pleasure is humiliation and degradation — and the repressive forces of social norms. She tells Husson, 'I'm completely lost. I can't help myself; I can't do anything about it ... I can't live without this.' But after Husson's visit she immediately resigns; and when the young gangster, Maurice, whom she met at the brothel, appears at her house, she begs him to leave. After her adventure she desperately wants to return to the security of married life with Pierre. This wish is expressed in her final fantasy, when, at the end of the film, Séverine fantasies that Pierre — who is now paralysed, having being shot by Maurice — miraculously recovers. Then Séverine goes to the balcony and sees the landau approaching, thus reprising the motif of the opening fantasy sequence. This suggests that, despite all that she has lost, Séverine, incorrigible, still cherishes the same prohibited desires, so irrepressible is the impulse of fantasy.

All of these wish-fulfilling fantasies arise from the imagining subject's dissatisfaction with the reality of the present. Cinema's fantasy sequences give expression to repressed, forbidden, or hedonistic impossible desires. While occasionally the objective of fantasy is to magically overcome an intolerable situation, the majority of fantasies involve a sexual element. The function of fantasy is the imaginary realisation of that which is, for whatever reason, impractical or impossible in reality. We will see in the following chapter that there are some interesting similarities between waking fantasies and dreams, but that the differences between them are more significant.

Chapter 6. Dream

Freud's *Die Traumdeutung* arguably remains the definitive study of dreams, and so will be an important reference point in this chapter. In this book on dreams, Freud mentions the waking fantasy several times. First of all, like the fantasy, the dream unfolds, and its wish is represented as being fulfilled, in the present tense.[236] Unconscious fantasies of the dream-day, or of infantile origin, often form the material of the dream thoughts.[237] And Freud asserts that the enigma of the waking dreamer's impression of a complete and elaborate dream, which is experienced in a very short sleep of only a few minutes, is explained by the existence of pre-prepared fantasies.[238] This is to say that the process of secondary elaboration, by which the waking dreamer enforces logical coherence upon his memory of the desultory fragments of his dream, is occasionally bolstered by recourse to pre-existing fantasies of the unconscious.

But there are also some important differences between fantasy and dream in the relation of the images to consciousness. In contrast to the fantasy, the development of which the imagining-subject, though distracted, in some sense retains control over, the imagining subject, generally speaking, has no conscious control over the development of his dream. In *L'Imaginaire*, Sartre offers a compelling phenomenological account of dreams which we will now consider, and to which we shall return periodically.

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[236] Freud, S. (1900) *Die Traumdeutung*, p.376

[237] *Ibid*., pp.339-41

[238] *Ibid*., pp.342-44

The phenomenology of dreaming

Dream as fatality

For Sartre, the dream is distinguished by a characteristic '*fragility* that cannot belong to perception'; it is forever 'at the mercy of a reflective consciousness'.[239] At the same time, to the extent that it is irreal, it is beyond reach; its irreality 'confers a compact opacity and a strength upon it'.[240] Reflective consciousness is incompatible with the rapt fascination of the dream state: 'So long as the dream endures, consciousness cannot determine itself to reflect'[241]; 'the passage to perception can be made only by revolution'.[242] For there to be knowledge, Sartre insists, there must be 'reflective consciousness', a consciousness that is conscious of itself as consciousness, a waking consciousness. The dream is not knowledge but belief.[243]

> Consciousness is not only conscious of itself as enchained, but is also conscious that there is nothing it can do against itself […] It is not that the nonthetic consciousness of imagining ceases to grasp itself as spontaneity, but it grasps itself as spellbound. This is what gives the dream its nuance of fate. The events are given as unable not to happen, in correlation with a consciousness that cannot prevent itself from imagining them […] each moment of the story is given as having an imaginary future, but a future that I cannot foresee […] the imaginary world is given as a world without freedom

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[239] Sartre, J-P., *L'Imaginaire*, p.162

[240] *Ibid*., p.169

[241] *Ibid*., p.168

[242] *Ibid*., p.169

[243] *Ibid*., p.163

> [...] it is the inverse of freedom, it is fatal […] The dreamer does not say 'I could have a revolver', but all at once has a revolver in his hand.[244]

Identification

Frequently the dreamer himself appears within the dream. As soon as the dreamer appears within the dream everything within the dream assumes a further importance, which accounts for the effect of 'fascination'. Sartre compares the belief which this identification engenders to that of the naïve reader of a novel written in the first person:

> It is lived as fiction and it is only in considering it as fiction [...] that we can understand the kind of reactions that it provokes in the sleeper. Only, it is a 'spellbinding' fiction […] The dream is not fiction taken for reality, it is the odyssey of a consciousness dedicated by itself and in spite of itself to building only an irreal world.[245]

The credulous reader feels not only sympathy, but a sense of belonging. While the dream is 'a purely represented world', it is also 'a world immediately lived […] I am taken […] I cannot break the enchantment […] I am obliged to live the fascination of the irreal to the dregs.'[246]

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[244] *Ibid*., pp.168-69.

[245] *Ibid*., p.175

[246] *Ibid*., p.171

Before proceeding with our discussion of representations of dreams in cinema we will now consider some aspects of the relationship between the experience of dreaming and watching a film.

Films and dreams

Amongst the first to theorise the similarities between films and dreams were the surrealists. Though writing several decades after the first wave of surrealist films, Jacques Brunius's discussion is representative of the surrealists' interest in this subject:

> The darkness of the auditorium, tantamount to the closing of the eyelids on the retina and, for thought, to the darkness of the unconscious; the crowd that surrounds and isolates you, the deliciously crass music, the stiffness of the neck necessary for the orientation of one's gaze, provoke a state like being half-asleep […] the very technique of film evokes the dream more than waking. The images *fade in* and *fade out*, dissolve into each other, vision begins and ends in an *iris*, secrets are revealed through a keyhole, the mental image of a keyhole. The disposition of screen images *in time* is absolutely analogous with the *arrangement* thought or the dream can devise. Neither chronological order nor relative values of duration are real […] film, like thought, like the dream, chooses some gestures, defers or enlarges them, eliminates others [247]

[247] Brunius, J. (2000) 'Crossing the Bridge', in Hammond, P. (ed.) *The Shadow and its Shadow*, (first published 1954), p.100, Brunius's emphasis.

In ‘Surrealism and the Cinema’, Jean Goudal invokes Hippolyte Taine’s notion of the ‘reductive mechanism of images’, offering an account of the phenomenological distinction between dreaming and conscious forms of imagining such as day-dreaming. When we are awake, the images of our imagination ‘have an anaemic, pale colour’ by which they are distinguished from ‘the vigour and relief’ of perceptions. When we sleep, our external perceptions are relaxed, less vigilant:

> the reducing contrast no longer existing, the imaginary succession of images monopolises the foreground; as nothing contradicts them we believe in their actual existence. Awake, we imagine the real and the possible all at once, while in the dream we only imagine the possible.[248]

Goudal stresses this distinction in order to draw a comparison between the state of dreaming and viewing a film. At the cinema, ‘we see a whole host of material conditions conspire to destroy this “reductive mechanism of images.” ’ The darkness of the auditorium, for instance, analogous to the relaxation of sensory perception during sleep, ‘destroys the rivalry of real images that would contradict the ones on the screen.’[249]

But the surrealists are by no means alone in considering this subject. In *Le signifiant imaginaire* (1977) Christian Metz offers an interesting discussion of the relationship between film and dream. According to Metz, ‘the filmic state as induced by

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[248] Goudal, J. (2000) ‘Surrealism and Cinema’, in Hammond, P. (ed. and trans.) *The Shadow and its Shadow* (first published 1925), p.87

[249] *Ibid*.

traditional fiction films [...] is marked by a general tendency to lower wakefulness'.[250] The principal difference between film and dream is that '[t]he dreamer does not know that he is dreaming; the film spectator knows that he is at the cinema'.[251] Nevertheless there are situations in each where these principles are respectively weakened. In the dream, 'the degree of illusion of reality is inversely proportional to that of *wakefulness*.'[252] Certain nightmares and excessively pleasurable dreams result in the sleeper awakening. Certain insomnias can be understood as 'the work of the ego', wary of 'the prospect of its dreams', eschewing sleep. Where there is 'a lesser degree of violence in the internal conflict and therefore a lesser degree of wakefulness,' this same principle 'is responsible for the various regimes of consciousness in which the subject is sufficiently awake to know that it is only a dream — thus approaching a very common filmic situation'.[253] Conversely, the spectator can be 'carried away' by the film. Here Metz draws a comparison with somnambulism. While the motor outbursts of the somnambulist 'escape reality-testing', those of the captivated viewer 'remain under its control'. The spectator who 'begins to act' is shaken from his slumber, 'restoring the distance between the film and him.'[254]

Just as there are certain times when the spectator is no longer quite aware that he is at the cinema, so, conversely, the dreamer may, up to a point, be aware that he is dreaming:

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[250] Metz, C. (1977) *Le signifiant imaginaire: psychanalyse et cinéma*, trans. Britton, C., A. Williams, B. Brewster & A. Guzzetti, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press., pp.106-07

[251] *Ibid*., p.101

[252] *Ibid*., p.106, Metz's emphasis

[253] *Ibid*., p.105

[254] *Ibid*., p.102

> for instance, in the intermediary states between sleep and waking […] and […] at all those times when thoughts like 'I am in the middle of a dream' spring to mind, thoughts which, by a single and double movement, come to be integrated in the dream of which they form a part, and in the process open a gap in the hermetic sealing-off that ordinarily defines dreaming.[255]

Metz insists, '[i]t is in their gaps rather than in their more normal functioning that the filmic state and the dream state tend to converge'.[256] That is to say, that the convergence takes place 'when the spectator begins to doze off […] or when the dreamer begins to wake up.'[257] Ordinarily, however, film and dream are not confused, because the film spectator is awake, while the dreamer is asleep.

It is perhaps because of these various analogies between the phenomenological experience of dreaming and viewing a film that film is a medium particularly suited to the representation of dreams. Consider the following excerpt from an account of one of his own dreams, by Sartre:

> I took refuge in an armour-plated room, but he began, on the other side of the wall, to melt the armour-plating with a blowtorch. Now, I saw *myself*, on the one hand, transfixed in the room and waiting — while believing myself to be safe — and on the other hand, I saw the forger on the other side of the wall in

[255] *Ibid*., p.104

[256] *Ibid*.

[257] *Ibid*., p.108

> the process of cutting. I therefore knew what was going to happen to the object-me, who was still ignorant [258]

Is this effect of cross-cutting in the building of tension not cinematic? I can attest to being aware of similar omniscient narrating techniques, analogous to those of the cinema, in my own dreams. While it must be true that film language, the media we consume, affects the form of our dreams, is there not a more profound analogy between the forms of films and dreams? Indeed, is it not, on the contrary, that the film — even the classical Hollywood film — borrows something of its structure from the dream?

We will now consider some aspects of the formal presentation of filmic representations of dreams.

Form

The dream circuit

While we have spoken of the 'imagination circuit' and the 'fantasy circuit' in cinema, and we will speak of the 'hallucination circuit', generally speaking, there is no such thing as the 'dream circuit'. Most commonly, either the opening or the closing parenthetic shot is omitted. In classical cinema, the closing parenthetic shot is typically absent, narration passing from the dream directly to a new scene without showing the sleeper awakening. Traditionally, the opening parenthetic shot of the dreamer in the present is a conventional sign which enables the spectator to distinguish dream from reality, and has been considered indispensible. In modern

[258] *L'Imaginaire*, p.173, Sartre's emphases

cinema there are many variations of the traditional transition into dream. In *8 ½*, we pass from the present into a dream without a cut. Guido is lying in bed, his mistress, Carla, sitting up beside him reading, when his mother appears in the room, wiping the wall. At this instant we have coexistent dimensions: the world of the present, in which Guido and Carla lie in bed, and the dream world, in which his mother is present in the room.

Some dreams take the simple form of a conversation: an imaginary being appears, with whom the dreamer converses, the entire dream unfolding on the ground of the present. Robinson's dream in *Robinson Crusoe* (Luis Buñuel, 1954) unfolds on the ground of the present, in Crusoe's cave. Crusoe speaks to his father from the hammock in which he sleeps. The distinction between reality and dream becomes equivocal when the father disappears out of the cave, laughing wickedly, and Crusoe rises from his hammock and grabs his axe, as though in pursuit of his father. Offscreen, the father's haunting words continue: 'He will not forgive you. You will die like a dog. You will die.' Here, the father's voice is certainly imaginary, but when Crusoe then sinks his axe into the ground and repeats his father's words in resigned submission — 'I will die...I will die...' — it is clear that we have emerged from the dream; Crusoe really did get out of bed and pick up the axe; for a moment, he mistook dream for reality. In such cases as this, dream closely resembles hallucination.

The dream in modern cinema

Classical cinema implicitly adheres to several generally accepted governing principles in presenting dreams:

- a film must never begin with a dream sequence;
- no dream sequence should last more than a few minutes;
- there should be no doubt as to when a dream sequence begins and ends

Much modern cinema does not recognise these rules. In the following discussion, we consider some formal aspects of dream sequences in modern cinema.

Absence of the opening parenthesis of dream circuit

The opening parenthesis of the dream circuit is sometimes omitted by the simple fact that the film opens with a dream, as in *8 ½*. Two thirds of the way through *Mulholland Drive* we discover that all the events hitherto have been a dream. In such cases one can often distinguish the dream by signs, in the form and content of narration. But sometimes, where the opening parenthesis of the circuit is absent, we are unable to discern from the content and progression of a sequence that it is a dream, and only the closing parenthesis of the circuit will retrospectively confer this status upon it. In accordance with verisimilitudinal conventions which seem to derive from the horror genre, the dream functions as a ruse, deceiving us into believing that the dreadful scenes presented are real, only to reveal them to be a dream.[259]

Sometimes, where both the opening and closing parentheses are omitted it is impossible to be certain whether or not a given sequence represents a dream. In *Cross of Iron* (Sam Peckinpah, 1977) we pass from a fast-paced battle scene into what appears to be a lengthy dream sequence, without any explicit formal indication. The

[259] See, for instance, the dream sequences in Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986) and *Dead Ringers* (1988).

sequence establishes that Steiner has been wounded in action and is recuperating in a sanatorium. But here it becomes difficult to distinguish dream-images from reality. For instance, several times we see Steiner in civilian clothing, his head bandaged and arm in a sling, running through the woods as though he was still on the battlefield. It seems reasonable to understand these scenes as memory images from the recent past: a man of action, Steiner is unsuited to the sedentary life at the sanatorium; he has become so accustomed to the conditions of war that he has difficulty adjusting to any other environment. Thus we might assume that these scenes depict events which actually occurred. As such, they might be autonomously narrated, or we may attribute them to Steiner's memory. But consider the scene in which Steiner jumps into the river and the Russian boy, whom his troop took in, appears, and throws him a knife. At the beginning of the battle sequence which preceded his internment, Steiner encountered the boy in the forest and the boy threw him a knife as a gift, before leaving. But almost immediately after this, Steiner saw the boy murdered by Russian soldiers. Thus his encounter with the boy at the river is imaginary; it re-enacts an actual event. There are, then, two possible interpretations of this encounter: either the sequence, including the preceding shots of the wounded Steiner running through the woods, is entirely imaginary (dream), or Steiner really did run through the woods and jump into the river, and the nurse really did wade into the river to fetch him — in which case the encounter with the boy is a hallucination. As the sequence progresses, the action passes to a banquet and dance at the sanatorium, and it is unclear whether this is part of Steiner's dream or whether it is a hallucination, presenting Steiner's subjective experience of an actual event.

In *Blue Velvet*, a sequence which commences as an act of waking imagination is subsequently revealed to have been a dream. On his way home after his first eventful evening in Dorothy Vallens's apartment, Jeffrey takes stock of what he has witnessed, and we see a series of images which seem to represent his imaginary construction of the evening's events: on the soundtrack a bestial artificial roar accompanies slow-motion images of Frank with an open mouth. Cut to a burning flame; the sound of wind and fire are heard in extreme close-up. Over a dark screen Frank says, 'Now it's dark.' Framed in extreme close-up, Dorothy begs Frank, 'Hit me. Hit me!' Then, the sound of Frank's punch coincides with Dorothy's scream, and Jeffrey wakes up in bed, prompting us to reinterpret the sequence as a dream. One might say that the act of joining Jeffrey's imaginings and his subsequent nightmare establishes a continuity between the events themselves, his memory of them, and his subsequent dream: the nightmarish quality which pervades all three justifies connecting waking imagination and dream in this way.

In *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (Luis Buñuel, 1972), which consists largely of a series of dream-sequences, the opening parenthesis of the dream circuit is in each case omitted. Stephen Kovàcs writes, 'Buñuel's dream sequences here grow out of real situations and it is only when they end up in peculiar conclusions followed by the dreamer waking with a start that we realise these events were the product of human fantasy.'[260] The dreams are disguised as such not only by the omission of the opening parenthetic shot of the dream circuit, but, as Harmonie H. Wu observes, by adherence to laws of narrative logic and continuity within these episodes. For instance, dinner at

[260] Kovàcs, S. (1999) '*The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*', in Kinder, M. (ed.), *Luis Buñuel's The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (first published 1972), p.183

the colonel's 'is deliberately constructed to link up in an ultratight transition' with the preceding scene of dinner at the Sénéchals':

> The colonel invites the friends to his house for dinner a week later and states his address: "17 rue de Parc." The scene cuts from the Sénéchals' living room to the number plate "17" on the colonel's apartment building *as* the colonel says the number. The camera then swish-pans to the street sign, "Rue du Parc" *as* the colonel says that. The transition from the invitation in the Sénéchals' living room to the dinner party one week later couldn't be more clearly mapped out […] The language of cinematic convention locks us into the logical next step of the narrative […] The editing is motivated and subordinated to the demands of the narrative.[261]

Such slick continuity cues work in tension with an action which, at the colonel's, becomes increasingly bizarre, until Sénéchal awakens and we understand that the sequence was a dream. 'Nothing therefore prepares us for the increasing strangeness of the scene which unfolds', writes Everett.[262] Later, when the bourgeois' dinner is interrupted and they are arrested, we shift to a new scene at the police station and, we quite logically assume this to be a new present. However, rather than continuing with the story of the incarceration of the bourgeois, the narrative here digresses as one officer tells another the story of the 'Bleeding Sergeant' and we enter a flashback which is subsequently revealed to have occurred within a dream.

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[261] 'Wu, H.H. (1999) 'Unravelling Entanglements of Sex, Narrative, Sound and Gender: The Discreet Charm of *Belle de jour*', in Kinder, M. (ed.), *Luis Buñuel's The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, pp.118-19

[262] Everett, W. (1998) 'Screen as threshold: the disorienting topographies of surrealist film', *Screen* Vol. 39, No. 2 (Summer 1998), p.149

Dream within dream

In *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, Buñuel presents a dream within a dream. The opening parentheses of both dreams are omitted. In a film such as this it becomes difficult to distinguish the ground of the present. Each time it seems that narration is unfolding within the present, but then a character wakes up, and we understand that the previous sequence was in fact a dream. The bourgeois settle down for dinner at the Sénéchals', but they are interrupted when the military colonel and a squadron of his men arrive; Mme Sénéchal accommodates them. After dinner, a young sergeant recounts a dream for the entertainment of the guests. The military personnel then depart, leaving the Sénéchals and their friends, but the colonel returns and invites them for dinner the following week. As we have seen, through a slick continuous transition, we then shift to the scene of dinner at the colonel's. The servant drops a salver of food before picking it up and presenting it at table; the bourgeois are unimpressed with the food, which seems to be plastic. Then there is a banging noise, a French theatrical convention, signifying that the curtain is about to rise. Overhead lamps illuminate the table. A curtain opens and the diners find that they are on a theatre stage before an audience. A man beneath the stage, hidden from the audience, delivers lines to the diners. Confounded, the guests hurriedly leave the stage. Only Sénéchal remains; bewildered, he exclaims, 'I don't know the lines!' With this, Sénéchal wakes up and tells his wife about the dream. Thus we are given to understand that the bizarre dinner at the colonel's was a dream, and that we have now returned to the present. We now shift to a social function at the colonel's, in which Rafael, the Ambassador, is the focus of attention. Various characters speak to him about his country, Miranda, and he answers each politely and cordially. But then the

colonel insults him, calling Miranda a 'semi-barbaric country'. A confrontation ensues, and Rafael shoots the colonel. Then Thévenot wakes and explains to his wife: 'I dreamt that I ... no ... I dreamt that Sénéchal dreamt that we were at a theatre ... Then we were guests at the colonel's ... and he quarrelled with Raphael.'

Everett makes the important point — one which is easily overlooked — that when the sequence is revealed to have been Thévenot's dream, there remain several loose ends which this cannot account for. 'How', for instance, 'does Thévenot happen in his dream to hear intimate snatches of conversation between his wife and the Ambassador with whom (unbeknownst to him) she is having an affair?'[263] In this film and others, Everett writes, 'Buñuel exploits to the full the natural ambiguity of film, its ability to depict all events as equally real. In so doing, of course, he also foregrounds and explores the surrealist belief in the reality of dream and imagination.'[264] James Tobias says of the dream sequences in this film, '[w]e cannot judge where they begin until we receive an explicit wake-up call that announces that they have ended.'[265] But here the apparent end of the dream (Sénéchal wakes up) turns out to be a false ending. When Sénéchal wakes up we understand that the previous sequence was a dream, but quite reasonably assume that we then return to the present. Now, however, we find that when Sénéchal woke up *we remained within a dream*. The bizarre dinner at the colonel's was a dream within a dream. But where exactly did Thévenot's dream begin? If dinner at the colonel's was Sénéchal's dream within Thévenot's dream,

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[263] Everett, W. (1998) 'Screen as threshold: the disorienting topographies of surrealist film', *Screen* Vol. 39, No. 2 (Summer 1998), p.150

[264] *Ibid*.

[265] Tobias, J. (1999) 'Buñuel's Net Work: The Detour Trilogy', in Kinder, M. (ed.), (1999) *Luis Buñuel's The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, p.149

then surely the preceding dinner at the Sénéchals' must also have been part of Thévenot's dream, since it was here that the bourgeois received the invitation to dinner at the colonel's. The flashback which animates the young sergeant's account of his dream becomes a dream within a dream within a dream. Victor Fuentes writes, '[i]n its use of interlocking dreams, the last part of the film moves us from one deception to another until we can no longer distinguish dreams from ordinary reality'.[266]

Flashback within dream

We have seen, in the young sergeant's account of his dream in *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie,* that sometimes a dream is presented in the form of a flashback. In this case, we later discover that this flashback occurred within a dream of a second character, and that this dream occurred within the dream of a third character. Later in the film we find another flashback in an episode which is subsequently revealed to be a dream. When the police arrive at the Sénéchals' and unceremoniously arrest the bourgeois diners, we shift to the police station, where two officers are in conversation. Other officers leave the station in a hurry, and the older officer explains that this is because it is the 14th of June, 'The Bleeding Sergeant's Day'. As he recounts the Bleeding Sergeant's story, we enter a flashback in which the sergeant tortures a prisoner on a grand piano which is rigged up with electricity. We then return to the present, and the officer explains that on the 14th of June the sergeant was killed in a demonstration. Every year since then his ghost has returned to redeem himself. We

[266] Fuentes, V. (1999) 'The Discreet Charm of the Postmodern: Negotiating the Great Divide with the Ultimate Modernist, Luis Buñuel', in *Luis Buñuel's The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, p.92

then see the scene later that night as the sergeant's ghost releases prisoners from their cells. But then the police inspector wakes in the present, and it is clear that the narrative of 'The Bleeding Sergeant's Day' was a dream. Thus, occurring within a dream, the function of flashback here remains limited to the narrative of the dream, and has no relevance to the diegetic world outside of the dream.

But flashback within dream can also establish a back-story to which we grant credence, as in Jenny's flashback during her dream in *Raising Cane*. Jenny wakes from a dream in the middle of the night and realises that she has given her lover, Jack, and her husband, Carter, each other's presents by mistake. Jenny's waking up here is subsequently revealed as a false ending — she is in fact still dreaming, but we are not yet aware of this. As she drives to Jack's hotel in the middle of the night, a flashback emerges and her voiceover recounts the story of how she and Jack became lovers. But, when subsequently revealed to have occurred within the dream, this flashback loses none of its validity. The fact that the flashback was part of a dream ought really to affect its integrity, even if we only establish that it occurred within a dream retrospectively. But this is the only information the film proffers regarding Jenny and Jack's back-story, and, despite the fact that it occurs within a dream, it seems perfectly plausible.

Between these two examples there is a significant difference. In Buñuel's film, the flashback represents an exposition of an imaginary scenario from within an already imaginary scenario; in *Raising Cane*, within a sequence which is subsequently revealed to be a dream, the flashback presents a credible back-story which is significant to the story of the actual diegesis. While dreams do sometimes contain

truthful elements and revive actual memories, films which insert flashbacks that are to be granted credence within dream sequences, in obliging it to perform an expositional function — the function proper to flashback — fail to recognise the psychic peculiarities of the dream.

Contingencies of the present

As in fantasy, aspects of the subject's physical environment often find means of expression in distorted form in the dream-content. In *Die Traumdeutung*, Freud takes issue with previous theories of dreams, which understand the content of dreams to be determined by somatic stimuli. While he admits the influence of somatic stimuli, Freud finds this an inadequate explanation of the source of dreams, since it does not account for the distortion of dream-content. Advocates of this theory 'have failed to explain [...] why the true nature of the external stimulus is not recognised in the dream, but is constantly mistaken for something else'.[267]

Sartre seems to refer to the effect of contingencies of the present on dream-content, and to the fact of the distortion of the dream-content — though he does not adhere to Freud's explanation for this distortion — when he notes dreams, cited by psychologist Pierre Janet, in which a prolonged noise (presumably emitting from a source in the sleeper's present physical environment) 'can be successively grasped by consciousness as *standing for* a mass of diverse objects but never *for itself*'.[268] Thus dreaming is distinguished from perception to such an extent that 'in the dream,

[267] *Die Traumdeutung*, p.119

[268] Sartre, J-P. (1940) *L'Imaginaire*, p.164, Sartre's emphasis

consciousness *cannot perceive*, because it cannot leave the imaging attitude in which it has enclosed itself.'[269]

Consistent with the observations of Freud and Sartre, where elements of the sleeper's present environment find expression in dream-content, it is usually in distorted form. In *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968) the intransigent elderly nun in Rosemary's first dream represents her neighbour, Minnie Castevet. As she goes to sleep, Rosemary can hear Minnie and Roman arguing upstairs. The words uttered by the nun in the dream are in fact Minnie's words, which reverberate through the wall. In the transition to the second — and central — dream, the present retains a presence as Rosemary appears in the dream lying on her bed, which now floats on a serene blue sea. And when Rosemary reclines against the boat's ladder and a pair of hands removes her clothes, Guy really is removing her clothes in the present. Here, the environment of the present impinges upon dream-content to an extraordinary extent. One would usually expect the sleeper's immediate physical environment to be relatively free of disturbances (or else the sleeper would awaken). But in this case, Rosemary has been drugged and remains unconscious, despite all that she experiences in the present. This is an exceptional case, since much of what Rosemary dreams about, she actually experiences in the present: Guy really does remove her clothes; her wedding ring really is removed from her finger; while semi-conscious, she really is raped by Roman Castevet; the crowd of elderly people who gather to witness the rite are real.

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[269] *Ibid.*, Sartre's emphasis

Resurrecting the dead

The dead have as much right to existence within the dream as do the living, since here all are equally irreal. (In filmic representations, where the dreamer knows that the deceased person who appears in her dream was murdered, this person often exhibits the raw wounds from which she perished.) Freud insists that there is nothing extraordinary about the presence of dead relatives in dreams: 'How often it happens that we say to ourselves: "If my father were still alive, what would he say to this?" The dream can express this *if* in no other way than by his presence in a definite situation.'[270] In *8 ½*, Guido encounters his father at a site of Roman ruins. The father asks his producer how Guido is getting along, but the producer does not answer. Guido says, 'Father there are so many things I want to say to you. There's so much that I want to ask you ... ' But his father promptly disappears. Though his father is dead, Guido unconsciously desires to make him proud. By reviving his father, the dream actualises this possibility, only to then thwart it with the producer's silence.

Absurd appearance

In *Die Traumdeutung*, Freud notes that many previous studies of dreams, unable or unwilling to penetrate beyond the bizarre surface appearance of many dreams, deny or neglect the possibility that dreams might be meaningful, instead dismissing them as nonsense. For Freud, the absurd appearance of the dream is a product of the process of distortion between the latent dream-thoughts and the manifest dream-content: 'the dream-thoughts are never absurd [...] the dream-work produces absurd dreams'.[271] Contradictions in the dream-thoughts are distorted, so that they assume an absurd

[270] *Die Traumdeutung*, p.283

[271] *Ibid.*, p.297

aspect in the dream-content. More than this, Freud claims, 'a dream frequently has the profoundest meaning in the places where it seems most absurd', since the most significant insights — those which are potentially most damaging to the ego — customarily cloak themselves under the guise of folly.[272]

Sartre offers a phenomenological explanation of the specific characteristics of the imaging consciousness of the dreamer, which accounts to some extent for the bizarre appearance of dreams:

> every dream image appears with its own world […] the images remain isolated from one another, separated by their essential poverty, subjected to the phenomenon of quasi-observation, '*in the void*'; they do not sustain between them any relations other than those that consciousness can at each moment conceive in constituting them […] there are as many 'worlds' as images, even if the sleeper, passing from one image to another, 'dreams' that they remain in the same world.[273]

Cinema's most effective dream sequences recognise this aspect of dreams. The first part of the central dream sequence in *Rosemary's Baby* takes place on the deck of a boat, but when Rosemary descends the boat's ladder, instead of entering the cabin, she arrives in a large room with a bed. In *Accattone* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1962), the dreamer is summoned by the Neopolitan thugs who assaulted his girlfriend, but upon reaching them he discovers in their place several corpses amongst a pile of rubble.

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[272] *Ibid.*, p.296

[273] *L'Imaginaire*, pp. 166-67

Role transgression

In the previous chapter we saw an instance of role transgression within a fantasy in *Subida al cielo*, but this phenomenon is far more common in the dream. People whom the dreamer knows often appear in dreams with different identities; or two or more discrete individuals are combined in one person. Freud discusses this phenomenon in an analysis of one of his own dreams:

> *R. Is my uncle.* What can that mean? [...] My father [...] used always to say that uncle Joseph had never been a bad man, but, after all, he was a simpleton. If, then, my friend R. is my uncle [*sic*] Joseph, that is equivalent to saying: R. is a simpleton.[274]

In *Farenheit 451* (François Truffaut, 1966), Montag works for the fire brigade, which, in this bleak vision of the future, no longer extinguishes fires, but burns books. But he begins to think differently about his profession when he starts to read some of the books that he finds. One day the fire brigade discover a library in a house they raid. The old woman chooses to perish with her books rather than live without them. Later, in his dream, Montag recreates this scene, but replaces the old woman with Clarisse, a young woman whom he has recently befriended. In fact, Clarisse and the old woman knew each other, and Montag seemed to suspect this when they raided the old woman's house; without having met her, he seemed to recognise her. By identifying Clarisse with the old woman in his dream, Montag confirms that there is a connection between the two women, and thus, significantly, establishes that Clarisse reads books.

[274] Freud, S. (1900) *Die Traumdeutung*, p.49

The film opposes Clarisse to Montag's wife, Linda, both of whom are played by Julie Christie but who have contrasting personalities. Linda desires nothing more than to sit and watch television and socialise with her like-minded friends, while Clarisse has her own personality; she is a real person. After beginning to read, Montag becomes increasingly alienated from Linda, and at the same time draws closer to Clarisse. Given that witnessing the old woman's death caused him great anxiety, in identifying Clarisse with the old woman, the dream thus expresses Montag's growing attachment to Clarisse and concomitant estrangement from Linda.

Symbolism

Aspects of the dreamer's real life are usually expressed in the dream only in distorted form. In the central dream episode of *Rosemary's Baby*, several characters mention that Rosemary is unwell, having been 'bitten by a mouse.' This clearly represents Minnie's chocolate mousse, with which Guy poisoned Rosemary and which Minnie, in her idiosyncratic New York accent refers to as 'mouse'. Sometimes dream symbolism is particularly transparent. In *Dead Ringers* (David Cronenberg, 1988) the bond between identical twins Bev and Eliot is threatened when Bev falls in love with Claire and refuses to share her with Eliot. While asleep beside Claire, Bev dreams that Eliot is in bed with them and that he and Eliot are physically joined at the stomach. When Claire attempts to separate them by biting into the monstrous fleshy growth by which they are joined to one another, this clearly symbolises the breech she is establishing between them.

Having discussed formal aspects of cinema's dream sequences, we will now consider what functions filmic representations of dreams perform.

Function

Wish fulfilment

According to Freud every dream, even those whose effect is unpleasant and whose content produces anxiety, is a wish-fulfilment.[275] Freud devotes a brief chapter to uncomplicated wish-fulfilment dreams, which are most prevalent in children. Generally speaking, it is rare to find cinematic representations of such simple wishes, but there are some. In *Born on the Fourth of July* Ron recovers in a veteran's hospital after being wounded in action. His legs are shot and it is doubtful whether he will walk again, but he is determined. With the encouragement of the hospital staff, he builds his upper body strength and gains confidence and hope as he gradually becomes more mobile on his crutches. Assuredly conveying himself through the ward, Ron gets carried away and falls, badly breaking his leg. From this image of dashed hope we enter a dream sequence in which a young, clean-shaven, fresh-faced Ron appears in the ward amidst a crowd of other patients, all of whom are in wheelchairs and appear quite still. Ron rises from his wheelchair, and the other patients watch him walk amongst them. Approaching the camera, he begins to run and smiles joyfully. Cut to the present, where a long-haired, unshaven Ron is strapped to his bed, staring at his vomit on the floor, desperately pressing a button for assistance. In the subsequent scene a doctor informs him that he will never walk again. Ron's dream of rising from his chair and walking, indeed running out of the ward, thus represents the fulfilment of an impossible wish. Young, short-haired, clean-shaven, fresh-faced, fit and healthy, the Ron of the dream is the pre-war Ron. Despite his proud patriotism, he would give anything to return to this time.

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[275] *Ibid.*, pp.67-69

While the majority of wish-fulfilling waking fantasies contain an erotic element, this is true of only a minority of dreams. And many erotic dreams are distinct from wish-fulfilling erotic fantasies to the extent that unequivocally wish-fulfilling erotic dreams are rare.

Freud's theory of wish-fulfilment in dreams is complex. Usually the wish derives from unconscious infantile sources, which have long since been repressed by the development of the ego and its mechanism of censorship. In the state of sleep this censorship is relaxed, enabling unconscious ideas to rise to the level of the preconscious. But the censorship is not entirely relaxed during sleep. Its residual operation defends it against wishes which might do it damage, by distorting the ideas which it receives from the preconscious. Thus the wish-fulfilling tendency in many dreams is unrecognisable prior to a thorough analysis. The intensity of the distortion corresponds to the intensity of the ego's resistance to the unconscious wish.[276]

Anxiety

Far from being obvious wish-fulfilments, many dreams contain some undesirable element, expressive of the dreamer's deep anxieties. In *Esta Noite Encarnarei no Teu Cadáver*, when Joe learns that one of the women whom he has killed was pregnant, he is plagued by guilt, and dreams that a supernatural being drags him from his bed down into a Dantean underworld, as punishment for killing the unborn child. In *The Conversation*, Harry is deeply troubled by the thought that his work could lead to violence. He dreams of meeting the young woman, one of the interlocutors of the

[276] *Die Traumdeutung*, pp.52-53

conversation he has recorded, whom he tries to warn that she may be in trouble ('He'd kill you if he got the chance'). He then finds himself in the hotel room where he discovers horrific blood stains and sees a bald man (the client who contracted him to record the conversation) attack the young woman.

In *Wild Strawberries,* Isak has a chilling dream in which he witnesses a coffin spill onto the ground when a horse-drawn carriage collides with a lamppost. He approaches the corpse lying in the street half out of the coffin, and discovers that it is himself. The dead Isak comes to life and tries to drag the living Isak into the coffin. The dream thus expresses Isak's anxiety about aging and death. In his subsequent examination dream, the examiner asks Isak to identify a bacteria through a microscope, but he is unable to; he is asked the meaning of a passage of Latin, but cannot translate it. Among the few assembled witnesses at the examination are the young trio of travellers who are accompanying him and Marianne on their journey. Their presence in the dream suggests that Isak is unconsciously anxious at the thought of having his faults exposed before these young people who so admire him. Isak is instructed to examine a patient and offer a diagnosis. After he has declared the patient dead, the woman comes to life and laughs wickedly at his error. The examiner accuses Isak of being 'guilty of guilt' and accompanies him to a scene from his past in which he witnessed his wife's infidelity in the woods. The penalty for his life's sins, the examiner explains, is simple: loneliness. We discussed earlier the dream in *8 ½,* in which Guido's (dead) father asks his producer how his son is getting along. This reveals Guido's continuing unconscious anxiety to realise the recognition and approval of his father. We might better understand this dream, and Isak's examination dream, if we turn to Freud, who understands the examination dream as a

'typical' form of anxiety dream, which revives infantile memories of transgression and punishment, but which also, paradoxically, offers the dreamer consolation:

> These are the ineradicable memories of the punishments we suffered as children for misdeeds which we had committed — memories which were revived in us on [...] the gruelling examination at the two critical junctures in our careers as students […] we dream of our matriculation [...] whenever we fear that we may be punished by some unpleasant result because we have done something carelessly or wrongly [...] whenever we feel the burden of responsibility [...] the anxiety-dream of examination occurs when the dreamer is anticipating a responsible task on the following day, with the possibility of disgrace; recourse will then be had to an occasion in the past on which a great anxiety proved to have been without real justification, having, indeed, been refuted by the outcome.[277]

For Isak the 'responsible task on the following day' is his anniversary ceremony; for Guido it is the production of his film. Isak clearly regrets certain aspects of his behaviour and decisions he made in the past, both in his youth and during his marriage — these are the things that he has done 'carelessly or wrongly'.

Where the dreamer has a masochistic personality, the dream can be simultaneously wish-fulfilling and anxiety-producing. In *Belle de Jour*, Séverine's dream, in which Husson flings wet mud in her face while her husband Pierre observes, functions both as a masochistic wish fulfilment and as a symbolic expression of the guilt she feels at

[277] *Ibid*., pp.167-68

her secret life as a prostitute: spending her afternoons working at a brothel is like having muck thrown in her face; it makes her feel dirty. At the same time, as her fantasies reveal, she has a masochistic personality and enjoys this feeling. Husson's role in the dream — as he flings mud at Séverine, he insults her: 'You old bag! Scum! Maggot! Flea-bite! Fellatiomane! Spermofalsie!' — anticipates his subsequent discovery of her secret when he meets her at the brothel and subsequently declares that he will tell Pierre, who is now paralysed. The dream thus expresses Séverine's subconscious anxiety that Husson will discover her secret and inform Pierre.

Occasionally we find a complete shift of emphasis within the dream. In *Nayak* (Satyajit Ray, 1966), the film star's dream appears to be a straightforward wish-fulfilment: finding himself in a land of paper money, he revels amongst the mounds of notes. There is no diegetic sound, only a dreamy nondiegetic musical accompaniment. But then the mood changes: the music ceases and the sound of an eerie wind emerges. The dream assumes a nightmarish aspect (and expressionist form) as skeletal hands emerge from the mounds of money, holding the receivers of ringing telephones. Finally, the film star becomes submerged within the piles of money, and is sucked into it, as though into a swamp, until he is entirely submerged. When he subsequently recounts the story of his career to the female journalist, the symbolism of the dream becomes quite explicit: in becoming a film star he has compromised his artistic integrity for money and fame. Here, an apparently simple wish-fulfilling scenario becomes an anxiety dream.

Dealing with matters of great importance

Sometimes the unconscious forces of dream assist a detective in his investigation. In Episode 2 of *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990) Agent Cooper has a dream, in which the murdered Laura Palmer whispers to him the name of her killer. Upon waking he — inevitably — cannot remember the killer's name, but the dream nevertheless provides clues which ultimately form the point of departure for his investigation ('Crack the code, solve the crime'). Cooper is a professional detective, but, as we have seen, there are others who, for various reasons, are obliged to assume the role of detective. *Fear X* opens with a dream in which, from his window, Harry observes a blonde woman in the snow approach the house opposite. At first this sequence seems innocuous, but when Harry later recalls the dream, it comes to assume profound significance. He senses that he may find information concerning his wife's murder in the house opposite: he observes the house and finally breaks in and steals some photographic negatives which eventually lead him to his wife's killer. Rather than taking Harry for a mystic, who makes decisions based on the interpretations of his dreams, it seems that the opening dream sequence revives a half-forgotten perception — Harry really did see a blonde woman approach the house opposite; the dream merely reminded him of this.

In investigating his wife's murder, Harry becomes a vigilante detective, but there are others whose search goes back further, excavators of their own pasts who search for clues in their dreams. In *Twelve Monkeys* (Terry Gilliam, 1995) James Cole is — or believes he is — a time traveller from the future. He repeatedly experiences the same dream, which he believes recreates a scene he witnessed as a child, in which a man is shot at an airport and dies in the arms of a blonde woman. Having kidnapped his

psychiatrist, Cole tells her that she is the woman in the dream. His conviction that he is from the future accounts for the fact that in the dream she is an adult and he a child, while, in the reality of the present, they are roughly the same age. It subsequently emerges that the man who is shot in the dream is, in fact, Cole. Thus, while he does not yet realise it, in the dream, as a child he witnesses his own death. Ultimately the film posits two possible interpretations: either Cole is insane and by dying at the airport he fatally realises the content of the dream which has so obsessed him, or we grant credence to the science-fiction plot, in which case the dream really does revive Cole's childhood memory of witnessing his own death. Having thus unwittingly witnessed his own death as a child, in the repeated dream which revives this memory, Cole is prey to an extraordinary sense of *déjà vu*. When he identifies Catherine as the woman in the dream it becomes apparent that the dream is somehow related to his investigation of the Army of the Twelve Monkeys. His uncanny feeling becomes increasingly intense with each dream, until finally he fulfils his destiny and is killed at the airport.

In distinguishing dreams from fantasies, Freud claims that in the fantasy the 'conceptual content' is 'thought', while in the dream it 'is transformed into visual images, to which we give credence'. He goes on to state that 'this transformation of ideas into visual images does not occur in dreams alone, but also in hallucinations and visions, which may appear spontaneously in health, or as symptoms in the psychoneuroses.'[278] In the comprehensive theoretical exposition at the end of *Die Traumdeutung*, Freud introduces a topographical model of the psychic apparatus to present the directional movements between sensation and motility through the

[278] *Die Traumdeutung*, pp.376-77

systems Unconscious, Preconscious and Conscious. The direction of the dream is *regressive* in that it travels from perception to motility, converting ideas into images. During the day, the ego is protected against images from the unconscious by the fact of the 'uninterrupted sensory current in a progressive direction'.[279] During the night, this current is stopped; the direction of psychic activity becomes regressive, and images from the unconscious reach consciousness, though they are distorted due to the residual operation of the censorship of the ego. This concept of the regressive direction of psychic activity in the dream both explains why it gives expression to infantile wishes, and accounts for the vivacity of its images, which are primarily visual. Freud explains,

> that which is older [...] is at the same time formally primitive and, in the psychic topography, nearer to the perception-end […] dreaming is on the whole an act of regression to the earliest relationships of the dreamer, a resuscitation of his childhood, of the impulses which were then dominant and the modes of expression which were then available.[280]

But, Freud stresses, this regressive direction of psychic activity is not unique to the dream. We find this regression also in 'morbid waking states', in which '[r]egression occurs in spite of the uninterrupted sensory current in a progressive direction':

> The hallucinations of hysteria and paranoia, as well as the visions of mentally normal persons, I would explain as corresponding, in fact, to regressions, i.e.

[279] *Ibid*., p.384

[280] *Ibid.*, pp.388-89

> to thoughts transformed into images; and would assert that only such thoughts undergo this transformation as are in intimate connection with suppressed memories, or with memories which have remained unconscious.[281]

Here, then, Freud posits a psychic connection between dreams and states of madness. Writing not long after Freud, Bergson, too, posits a relation between dreams and madness, understanding both in materialistic terms:

> these threads so beautifully stretched from the periphery to the periphery, are just what ensure by the solidity of their connections and the precision of their interweaving the sensori-motor equilibrium of the body [...] Relax this tension or destroy this equilibrium: everything happens as if attention detached itself from life. Dreams and insanity appear to be little else than this [...] we must suppose in deep sleep, at least a functional break in the relation established in the nervous system between stimulation and motor reaction […] in every way dreams imitate insanity. Not only are all the psychological symptoms of madness found in dreams [...] but insanity appears also to have its origin in an exhaustion of the brain, which is caused, like normal fatigue, by the accumulation of certain specific poisons in the elements of the nervous system [...] Is it not likely [...] that the loss of mental equilibrium in the insane is simply the result of a disturbance of the sensory-motor relations established in the organism? This disturbance may be enough to create a sort of psychic vertigo, and so cause memory and attention to lose contact with reality. [282]

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[281] *Ibid*., pp.384-85

[282] Bergson, H. *Matière et Mémoire*, pp.227-29

Without adopting Freud's psychoanalytic methodology or completely embracing Bergson's materialism, we will content ourselves to accord that there is a connection between the images of dreams and states of madness and hallucinations, which is the subject of the final chapter.

Chapter 7. Hallucination

Misperception

We distinguish misperception from hallucination for reasons which we shall discuss below. Some comments from Bergson on the nature of perception will help us to better understand the phenomenon of misperception:

> there is no perception which is not full of memories. With the immediate and present data of our senses we mingle a thousand details out of our past experience. In most cases these memories supplant our actual perceptions, of which we then retain only a few hints, thus using them merely as 'signs' that recall to us former images. The convenience and the rapidity of perception are bought at this price; but hence also springs every kind of illusion.[283]

The notion that perception contains memories, and that memories are realised in a movement which resembles perception, provides a theoretical grounding from which we may explore the psychology of the phenomenon of misperception. Richardson notes that 'confusions between the inner world of images and the outer world of percepts are present in individuals who are neither neurotic nor psychotic but well within the range of healthy psychological functioning.'[284] Instances of misperception in cinema are relatively rare. In *Sabotage*, after learning of her younger brother Stevie's almost certain death on a blown up bus, Winnie faints. When she regains consciousness, a crowd of children have gathered around her and she repeatedly sees Stevie's face amongst them. Later, after killing her husband, who was responsible for

[283] *Matière et Mémoire*, p.24

[284] Richardson, A. (1969) *Mental Imagery*, p.6

Stevie's death, Winnie walks down the street, resigned to turning herself in, but still suffering from shock. A boy approaches her, carrying some film cans: it's Stevie! She goes to embrace him, but it is not Stevie — it was a misperception.

In his critique of Hume's theory of the image, which distinguishes images from perceptions on grounds of 'intensity', Sartre distinguishes misperceptions from mental images:

> How is it that we *never* take our images for perceptions? But sometimes we do, it will be said [...] I may take a tree trunk for a man. No doubt. But this is no confusion of image and perception. It is a false interpretation of an actual perception. There is no case […] in which an image of a man suddenly appearing in consciousness is taken for a real man actually perceived.[285]

In Chapter 5 we discussed Mallory's fantasy of the petrol-pump attendant in *Natural Born Killers*, which is borne from and perpetuated by a present perception. Cases such as this appear similar to but are in fact distinct from misperceptions. Mallory knowingly and deliberately imagines Mickey in place of the pump attendant. In cases of misperception, by contrast, while the person who misperceives realises that he or she is mistaken, the brief moment of misperception is nevertheless genuine. There is a momentary belief here which is lacking in the deliberate deceptions of the fantasist.

Generally speaking, misperceptions are distinguished from genuine hallucinations in their relation to the imagining subject's actual perceptions. In the above case from

[285] Sartre, J-P. (1936) *Imagination: A Psychological Critique*, p.87, Sartre's emphasis

Sabotage, one person is mistaken for another; the imagining subject imagines something where in fact there is something else, some existing object which resembles the imagined object. On the other hand, hallucinations seem to emerge *ex nihilo*; the hallucinating subject imagines something where there is nothing. But surely he perceives *some*thing. Sartre writes, hallucination 'is accompanied by a provisional collapse of perception'[286]; and 'the real and the imaginary cannot coexist by their very nature.'[287]

But in filmic representations of imagination the distinction between the real and the irreal is less clear. There are many cases in which aspects of the imagining subject's physical environment and situation influence, and are manifested in, the hallucination. We have seen that contingencies of the present sometimes find expression in fantasies and in dreams (though usually in distorted form); we find this phenomenon in many hallucinations also.

Form

Contingencies of the present

In *A Matter of Life and Death* (Michael Powel and Emeric Pressburger, 1946), a pilot, Peter Carter, is shot down, but due to heavy fog the attendant angels fail to take him to heaven. By the time an envoy, Conductor 53, finally comes for him, he has fallen in love with June, the American woman to whom he spoke on the radio in the moments before his aircraft crashed. In a magnificently English insistence on fair play and proper respect for the rules, he refuses to proceed to the afterlife on the

[286] *Ibid.*, p.151

[287] Sartre, J-P. (1950) *The Psychology of Imagination*, quoted in Laing, R.D. (1960) *The Divided Self*, London: Penguin, p.84

grounds that he has fallen in love due to a mistake from above. He demands the right to appeal for his life. The trial imminent, Peter sits with the conductor on the stairway to the other world and discusses the possible candidates for his defence counsel. He finds fault with each of the conductor's suggestions, and finally flees from him, descending the steps. The haunting circular piano motif on the nondiegetic score increases in tempo and dynamics, creating a dizzying effect, which is compounded by an increasingly closer and wobbly camera framing. The conductor calls after him: 'Peter, Peter! Come back!' As he descends further, Peter becomes more and more weary. From a close-up of Peter, exhausted and anguished, the image dissolves to him regaining consciousness in the present in Frank's library; the conductor's voice becomes that of June, calling, 'Peter, Peter! Come back!' It is no coincidence, either, that Peter's appeal in the other world coincides exactly with his operation in the present. And after the trial, when one surgeon congratulates another, who replies, 'An interesting case', it is clear that the surgeons and nurses of the operating theatre in the present were represented in the hallucination by the judges and officials of the trial in the other world.[288]

Many hallucinations commence as misperceptions — an object or person misperceived becomes the point of departure for an imagining. In *Odd Man Out*, having been wounded fleeing the bank robbery, escaped convict Johnny is abandoned by his brothers, and takes refuge in an empty concrete room. When a little girl enters to retrieve her football, Johnny hallucinates: taking the girl for a prison guard, he imagines that he is back in jail. He recounts to the guard a terrible dream in which he

[288] For an interesting discussion of the parallels between the trial and Peter's operation see Ruffles, T. (2004) *Ghost Images*, pp.152-59.

robbed a bank and was shot fleeing the scene, before realising that he is not in prison, his interlocutor is not a prison guard but a little girl, the robbery actually happened.

Before proceeding further with our discussion of hallucinations in cinema, we shall consider Sartre's phenomenological account of hallucination.

Sartre's phenomenology of hallucination

In *Imagination: A Psychological Critique*, Sartre sets down what he considers to be 'an unimpeachable given' for a new theory of the image:

> I cannot possibly form an image without at the same time knowing that I am forming an image; and the immediate knowledge I have of the image as such may become the basis for judgements of existence (of the type of 'I have an image of X,' 'This is an image,' etc.), but it is itself *prepredictive* evidence.[289]

Nevertheless, in the 'pathology of imagination' which he elaborates in *The Imaginary*, Sartre examines various other relationships between the attitude of consciousness and the irreal object. He postulates that hallucination may represent 'a radical upheaval of the attitude of consciousness with regard to the irreal', and 'a change of attitude in the face of the irreal can appear only as the counterpart of a weakening of the sense of the real.'[290] For the duration of the hallucination, perception 'collapses'. But when the hallucination has passed, the subject perceives once more. Thus it seems 'natural that

[289] Sartre, J-P. (1936) *Imagination: A Psychological Critique*, p.101

[290] Sartre, J-P. (1940) *L'Imaginaire*, p.152

the patient, speaking of the scene just witnessed, gives it as a part of the surrounding world'.[291]

Sartre describes the hallucinatory consciousness in terms of 'disintegration'.[292] The normal unity of consciousness remains, but 'this unity forms the indifferent ground on which the rebellion of spontaneities stands out':

> there is no longer a harmonious and continuous development of thought, realised by the personal synthesis and in the course of which other thoughts can be posited as possible, which is to say momentarily envisaged without being *realised*. But the course of thought, while it still claims to be a coherent development, is broken at each instant by adventitious lateral thoughts that can no longer be suspended in the state of possibilities, but which are realised as a countercurrent.[293]

In 'genuine hallucinations' this disintegration 'is much more thoroughgoing':

> these new forms of synthetic connection are incompatible with the existence of a personal synthesis and oriented thought […] perception becomes dark and foggy: object and subject disappear together […] there is only the sudden formation of a partial and absurd psychic system. This system is necessarily partial because it cannot be the consciousness, nor a thematic unity, and it is

[291] *Ibid*., p.151

[292] *Ibid*., p.155

[293] *Ibid*.

> precisely *for this reason* that the system appears. It is given in its very structure as anti-thematic [...] as something that cannot furnish the theme for a concentration of consciousness.[294]

We will now briefly consider Richardson's cognitive account of hallucination.

Cognitive theory of hallucination

While hallucinations 'are most frequently associated with such pathological conditions as the functional and organic psychoses,' writes Richardson, 'they do occur in otherwise normal subjects.'[295] Cognitive psychologists have examined hallucinations in normal subjects under conditions of sensory deprivation.[296] However, hallucinations produced in this way are often distinct from those associated with psychoses in that 'it is more frequent for the subject who obtains imagination images under conditions of perceptual isolation to be aware that what he sees or hears does not have reality status.'[297]

Richardson distinguishes hallucination from other forms of mental imagery in that in most cases it is based on a delusion. He writes,

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[294] *Ibid*., p.157

[295] Richardson, A. (1969) *Mental Imagery*, p.101.

[296] Huxley writes,

> Experimental psychologists have found that, if you confine a man to a 'restricted environment', where there is no light, no sound, nothing to smell and, if you put him in a tepid bath with only one, almost imperceptible thing to touch, the victim will very soon start 'seeing things', 'hearing things' and having strange bodily sensations.

Huxley, A. (1956) *Heaven and Hell*, London: Grafton, p.72

[297] Richardson, A. (1969) *Mental Imagery*, p.101

> When a person continues to act as if he believed in his projected image, even after having been shown that it must be false, we speak of him as deluded […] In the normal person a realisation that an image has been confused with a percept will occur more or less quickly depending upon such factors as the motivation and the opportunity to check upon the experience. If the person has a delusion into which the experience can be fitted the motivation to check will be absent. If the person with a delusion is forced to resolve the dissonance between his experience and an objective demonstration of its falsity, he is most likely to provide a rationalisation that will permit a continued belief in his delusion. A somewhat similar situation exists for the relatively normal person who believes in ghosts […] The percept-like experience is recognised as non-material, but is not recognised as being a subjective phenomenon. The 'ghost' is perceived within a reference frame which includes the possibility of apparitions.[298]

The related issue of not being able to distinguish images from perceptions raises interesting questions about the general imaging capability of those persons who experience hallucinations. Richardson cites the work of several researchers which suggests that, in ordinary circumstances, people who hallucinate generally have trouble distinguishing images from perceptions: 'visual hallucinations are more likely to occur in persons who have vivid imagination images, but who lack any general ability to differentiate an inner world of quasi-sensory events from an outer world of genuine sensory events.'[299]

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[298] *Ibid.*, p.113

[299] *Ibid.*, pp.117-18. See also p.123

These phenomenological and cognitive theories are relevant to the following discussion of filmic representations of hallucination, in which we distinguish between symbolic hallucinations, drug-induced hallucinations, recognised hallucinations, and genuine hallucinations.

Hallucination in cinema

Symbolic hallucinations

The primary function of some few filmic representations of hallucination appears to be symbolic. The hallucination is represented as being experienced by an imagining subject, but at the same time it is a symbolic expression of this character's madness. Symbolic hallucinations both signify and symbolise madness, in that they express something of the destiny of the imagining subject in relation to his milieu. Richardson stresses, 'the content of an hallucination typically reveals some aspects of the patients' anxieties or conflicts, just as dreams may do.'[300] Nowhere is this proposition demonstrated more vividly in cinema than in symbolic hallucinations. In *Repulsion* (Roman Polanski, 1965) Carol murders her suitor and disposes of his body in the bathtub. Later, wandering in a confused state, she enters the bathroom and turns away from the corpse, as though unwilling to recognise what she has done. As she backs into the hall, hands emerge from the wall to grab her; one hand grabs her breast. It seems that these hands at once represent the images of Carol's imagination, and are at the same time a figure, a metaphor, to represent her mental torment. At first Carol seems merely to be somewhat dreamy. Her exchanges with her suitor are peculiar, but appear inconsequential. He is keen; she seems perpetually distracted.

[300] *Mental Imagery* (1969), p.123

However, Carol subsequently murders him as well as her landlord when he tries to take advantage of her. The significance of the hands emerging from the wall is easily understood: Carol is irremediably frigid. She is not merely indifferent to the suitor's advances, but is repulsed, mortified at the thought.

In *The Conversation*, when Harry finally enters room 773, he searches for signs of a violent struggle but finds nothing; the room is immaculate. He searches particularly closely in the bathroom, yanking back the shower curtain as though expecting to find something behind it, before carefully examining the plughole in the bath.[301] He then lifts the toilet seat, and when he flushes the toilet, the scene changes. Sinister nondiegetic music enters as the toilet overflows with blood. Harry is plagued by guilt at the thought that the young couple whose conversation he recorded might be harmed as a consequence of his work. Finding no signs of the violent struggle he feared and anticipated, he finally flushes the toilet, thus symbolically disposing of any lingering doubt and guilt over the assignment. The bowl overflows with blood. The hallucination functions symbolically: though there is no discernible evidence of the consequences of his work, Harry cannot escape the doubt and guilt that is an imperative of his occupation; there is something dirty in his profession, which he is unable to cleanse himself of.

Near the end of *Shock Corridor*, after his involvement in fellow patient Trent's 'race-riot', Johnny is finally allowed to socialise with the other patients again. As he walks

[301] Cf. Kaja Silverman's psychoanalytic discussion of this scene in (1988) *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp.87-97. Drawing on the psychoanalytic theory of Julia Kristeva — in particular Kristeva's notion of the *abject* — Silverman elaborates an interesting argument about Harry's obsession with the conversation and his hallucinatory crisis in the bathroom of room 773.

the corridor, the soundtrack presents his inner thoughts: he curses the fact that, though Boden told him it, he can no longer recall the killer's name. Johnny then sits down next to Pagliacci and suffers a prolonged hallucination. A thunder storm howls through the hospital. Johnny desperately bangs on the doors, trying to escape, and finally shrieks, writhing on the floor. A lightning bolt strikes him down (symbolic of his electric convulsive therapy), and as he convulses in spasms on the floor, colour images of the cascades of a vast waterfall are inserted. Back in the present, Johnny remains seated next to Pagliacci, screaming. He is shocked to find that neither he nor Pagliacci are wet. He looks to the right and sees the other inmates going about their business. Not only was the rain a hallucination, but so, too, were Johnny's actions: he didn't desperately bang on the doors, break a chair or writhe on the floor; in fact, he did not move for the duration of the hallucination. Thus this seems to be a genuine hallucination (Johnny believes in the reality of the images), which at the same time functions symbolically, signifying Johnny's collapse into insanity. We noted in the previous chapter how, occasionally, dreams enable the dreamer to work through matters of great importance, to reach decisions. This is true here of Johnny's hallucination. Amidst the images of the hallucination are flash-inserts of four characters. The first three — Stuart, Trent and Boden — are the principal witnesses in Johnny's investigation into Sloane's murder; and the fourth face ... is that of Wilks. Once the hallucination has subsided, suddenly, Johnny remembers the killer's name: Wilks! Amidst the tumultuous disorder of his hallucination, a moment of sublime clarity; it is as though he wakes from a dream with the solution to a mystery.

Drug-induced hallucinations

Related to the symbolic hallucinations discussed above, there are some sequences which seem to offer a figurative realisation of drug-induced inebriation, but which do not, in fact, constitute representations of actual mental images. The sequence depicting Bob's high near the beginning of *Drugstore Cowboy* (Gus Van Sant, 1989) effectively demonstrates this. Bob is the leader of a small gang who obtain narcotics by robbing pharmacies. At the start of the film, as they flee from a robbery, Bob injects opiates in the back of the car. As his voiceover describes the pleasure of his inebriation, a series of objects — a spoon and needle, a cow, a tree, a man riding a bicycle, a sheep — float from left to right across the screen, superimposed over his face in close-up. Bob's face recedes, leaving only a blue sky with clouds, over which objects continue to pass — a house, a spinning aeroplane. Then Bob's face reappears, and the objects float back in the opposite direction, confirming that the apex of his euphoria has passed. Rather than understanding these floating objects as representations of the mental images of his imagination, it seems that they offer a figurative expression of the experience of his rapture.

In his essay *The Doors of Perception* (1954) Huxley describes his experiences after taking a quantity of mescaline. While Huxley cites the scientific investigations of researchers such as Jaensch and Havelock-Ellis, his own argument uses scientific fact as a stepping stone towards the elaboration of a mystical perspective. He writes,

> in one way or another, *all* our experiences are chemically conditioned, and if we imagine that some of them are purely 'spiritual', purely 'intellectual',

> purely 'aesthetic', it is merely because we have never troubled to investigate the internal chemical environment at the moment of their occurrence.[302]

In past times, the visions of God-fearing men were brought about by a combination of factors which produced chemical alterations in the body:

> When they were not starving themselves into low blood sugar and vitamin deficiency, or beating themselves into intoxication by histamine, adrenaline and decomposed protein, they were cultivating insomnia and praying for long periods in uncomfortable positions, in order to create the psycho-physico symptoms of stress. In the intervals they sang interminable psalms, thus increasing the amount of carbon dioxide in the lungs and the blood-stream, or, if they were Orientals, they did breathing exercises to accomplish the same purpose. Today we know how to lower the efficiency of the cerebral reducing valve by direct chemical action.[303]

Mescaline disengages the subject's concern with the quotidian aspects of biological survival — which ordinarily reduces our perceptual and phenomenal experience to that which is biologically useful — enabling access to 'the mind's Antipodes', to 'Mind at Large'. The hallucinations in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (Terry Gilliam, 1998) seem to come close to a filmic actualisation of the kinds of drug-induced hallucinations which Huxley describes — the effect of the drugs is not so much to induce subjective visions as to distort perceptions of the objective world.

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[302] Huxley, A. (1956) *Heaven and Hell*, p.120

[303] *Ibid*., pp.120-21

In general, however, the hallucinations of characters who are under the influence of narcotics are, from our perspective, less interesting than genuine hallucinations, since here the psychic state, of which the mental images are a manifestation, is brought about artificially, and in most cases deliberately. Our concern is rather with psychic states — and the mental images which are a manifestation of such states — which are brought about by specific narrative situations which are not reducible to the consumption of narcotics. For these reasons, some of the most interesting drug-induced hallucinations in cinema are those of characters who are unknowingly or unwillingly drugged.[304]

Then there are those who suffer excessive or unanticipated side-effects from prescriptive medication. In *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly, 2001), the hero hallucinates while watching an American football match with his father and some friends. A liquid form protrudes from his father's stomach and continues to stretch away from him. His father announces that he is going to get a beer, and the liquid form seems to anticipate his movements, guiding him to the refrigerator. Elsewhere Donny has hallucinations of a man in a bunny rabbit suit named Frank who prophesies that the world will end in one month, and instructs Donny to commit serious acts of vandalism and violence. In many ways Donny is presented as a normal teenage boy. At the same time, however, he takes Prozac for his mental health problems and it is possible that his hallucinations are induced by the medication. It seems clear enough that Donny does not here confuse reality with the irreality of his imaginings. He knows that the liquid form protruding from his father's stomach is

[304] See, for instance, Marlow's hallucination in *Murder, My Sweet* (Edward Dmytryk, 1944).

not actually there, just as he knows that Frank does not exist. But the most compelling representations of hallucination are those in which, for its duration, the imagining subject appears to believe in the reality of her hallucinations.

In *Videodrome*, exposure to the rogue signal of an illicit television show causes Max to hallucinate. When his secretary, Bridely, ejects the cassette from his VCR, Max rushes over, shouting, 'Don't touch that!' and slaps her face. For an instant, Bridely becomes Nikki (Debbi Harry). Max slaps Nikki and she becomes Bridely once more. When Max apologises, Bridely is confused: 'Hit me? You didn't hit me.'[305] Max is not insane, but he is attracted to explicit erotic and sadistic material. In the meeting with his colleagues at the start of the film, he dismisses the pilot of a Japanese show as 'soft'. His quest for 'something...tough' leads him to Videodrome, and his exposure to the show's signal causes his hallucinations. But the fact that he is attracted to Videodrome in the first place posits Max as deviant. Convex confirms that the show will affect anybody who watches it,

> 'But ... why would anybody watch a scummy show like Videodrome? Why did you watch it, Max?'
>
> 'Business reasons,' Max replies, sheepishly.
>
> 'But what about the other reasons? Why deny you get your kicks out of watching torture and murder?'

Thus, Max is deviant; he is attracted to prohibited objects, exposure to which causes his hallucinations. The hallucinations are punishment for his deviance. Here Videodrome acts as an artificial stimulant, a narcotic substitute, and Max's surrender

[305] Mikel Koven questions whether Nikki exists at all. See Koven, M.J. (1997) 'Voices from the Periphery: *Videodrome* and the (pre)Postmodern Vision of Marshal McLuhan', *Postscript*, Volume 4, No. 1 (Winter 1997), p.34

to the sensually undulating cassettes is suggestive of addiction. But Max's hallucinations are to be understood within the verisimilitudinal context of science-fiction, which proffers outlandish justifications for such experiences. More relevant to our discussion of madness and representations of mental images are hallucinations which occur in films with a more naturalistic aesthetic.

In *Track 29*, having been sexually assaulted when she was fifteen and obliged to give up the resulting baby, twenty years later Linda imagines — in an alcohol-induced crisis — that her son Martin comes to the U.S. from England to track her down. In the first scene Martin introduces himself to Linda and her friend, Arlene, in a café. In an uncanny way he is particularly drawn to Linda. Perturbed by Martin's interest, Linda departs. The first indication that Martin is not real comes when, at night, Linda anxiously watches him standing outside the house. She wakes her husband, Henry, inviting him to have sex, but Henry wants to sleep. Until this point we have no reason to doubt that Martin exists. He has come to America in search of his mother. In the diner he is drawn to Linda by some uncanny force; he seems to sense that she is his mother. Now he appears outside her house. However, when Linda says, 'He's come back. He's outside and he's waiting,' Henry's response — 'Oh no, he isn't' — suggests not only that he has heard about Linda's meeting Martin — though they do not discuss it — but that Linda regularly makes such claims, and that Henry no longer pays any notice. The subsequent scene between Linda and Martin in the bar confirms that Martin is an imaginary being, and that Linda's encounters with him are delusional hallucinations, the immediate cause of which seems to be alcohol abuse, which aggravates latent repressed guilt and anguish dating back to the traumatic episode of her adolescence. She sits at a table with Martin, and as she recounts the episode to

him, her legs parted, she mentally relives her sexual encounter with the bumper-car man. While she speaks, a waiter approaches and asks if she needs anything. As he returns to his colleague at the bar we see Linda from his perspective, sitting alone. 'She's talking to herself with tears in her eyes!' the barman explains.[306] Linda is quite drunk when she and Martin return home. With Henry away at a model train convention, in her stupor Linda imagines that Martin smashes his train set. From the bottom of the stairs she glimpses the destruction and turns away in horror. She summons Arlene and confides to her that she may have wrecked Henry's train set. Henry then arrives home and assures Arlene that Linda is 'loco', before going upstairs to find his train set intact.

From our perspective, drug-induced hallucinations are most interesting where, as in Linda's alcohol-fuelled hallucinations of Martin, the drugs aggravate or exacerbate a latent neurotic state.

Recognised hallucinations

In most drug-induced hallucinations, the imagining subject knows that he hallucinates. But there are other cases in which an imagining subject who is free of narcotics knows that he hallucinates. In normal consciousness 'every perception is given as able to be *observed*; every thought is given as able to be *pondered*'.[307] On the other hand, the partial systems of hallucinatory thought

[306] The film thus clearly establishes that Martin is an imaginary being. But then what of the opening scene in the diner? The fact that here both the waiter and Arlene converse with Martin suggests that he exists. Was this already a hallucination? When Linda subsequently reminds her friend of this, Arlene doesn't know what she is talking about. The suggestion that this scene was already a hallucination is significant in that, subsequently Linda only encounters Martin when she is alone, but in the opening scene both Arlene and the waiter also converse with Martin, thus they, too, must be a part of her hallucination.

[307] Sartre, J-P. (1940) *L'Imaginaire*, p.157, Sartre's emphasis

> *can in no way be observed* […] they are always given with a 'furtive' character that is constitutive of their being: their essence is to be ungraspable […] They are the word that one hears but cannot listen to, the faces that one sees but cannot look at.[308]

Sartre nevertheless believes that hallucinations are accompanied by a 'nonthetic' consciousness of their irreality.[309] But this nonthetic consciousness 'does not pass into the memory since […] the memory of the perceived object delivers us an irreality in the same way as a reality'.[310] The hallucinatory object will thus 'retain a neutral character in memory.'[311] The subject may have an awareness of the irreality of the hallucinatory object, but in memory it will reappear with all the force of actual perception:

> the essential characteristic with which the irreal object is delivered by memory is externality in relation to the current personal consciousness. It is given as having been unforeseeable and not able to be produced at will […] This externality and this independence are evidently very close to those of an object of the real world. At the same time, however, the object retains the

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[308] *Ibid*., p.157, Sartre's emphasis

[309] In a general review of Sartre's use of the term 'nonthetic' in his early phenomenological work, I understand it to mean *pre-reflective*.

[310] *L'Imaginaire*, p159

[311] *Ibid*., p159

> characteristics of a spontaneity: it appears as capricious, furtive, and full of mystery.[312]

In some of cinema's representations of hallucination, the imagining subject seems to recognise the irreality of the hallucinatory images, but remains powerless to prevent them. We have seen how, in *Esta Noite Encarnarei no Teu Cadáver*, upon learning that he has inadvertently killed Jarinda's unborn child, Joe's imperious self-assurance in his natural superiority is threatened. Henceforth, he is plagued by guilt and haunted by her curse ('This night I'll possess your corpse'). Joe is tormented, understanding his guilt to be a manifestation of an irrational phylogenetic weakness, the only means of overcoming which is propagation. After Laura, his chosen pro-creative partner, dies in labour, Joe hallucinates, imagining Jarinda before him with a snake wrapped around her shoulders. She cackles demonically and declares,

> 'This is the moment you dreaded. Tonight I'll possess your corpse to avenge the body you destroyed!'
>
> 'You are not real!' Joe exclaims. 'There is no reincarnation! You're a figment of my imagination, my tormented mind. You lie in the lake, rotting and disgusting. You're a mere lifeless vision!'

Thus Joe recognises the irreality of Jarinda's image, but in refuting her existence, he nevertheless speaks aloud — as though affirming her existence — addressing her directly in the second-person ('you'). Joe's torment is a lucid illustration of the conflict in his consciousness. On the one hand he rejects all religious superstition; on the other hand he is plagued by guilt and visions of his victims, which undermine the integrity of his nihilistic philosophy.

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[312] *Ibid*., pp.158-59

In *Solaris* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1972), the planet Solaris generates imaginary beings from the memories of the astronauts while they sleep. Kris is initially bewildered to find his wife, Hari, who committed suicide ten years earlier, resurrected. He subsequently comes to understand her presence as an opportunity for redemption. This brings him into opposition with the scientist, Sartorius, and their arguments raise some interesting questions about the empirical status of the visitors.[313] Are these hallucinations, or do they, within the verisimilitudinal context of the film, actually exist? The fact that it is not only Kris who sees Hari (*his* visitor) but Snauth and Sartorius can interact with her also, indicates that these are something more than hallucinations. Indeed the existential status of the visitors is better understood in the context of representations of ghosts, who are also frequently portrayed as being perceived simultaneously by more than one character. Just as ghosts exist within the verisimilitudinal context of the supernatural, so do the visitors of Solaris exist in their science-fiction context. The visitors are not hallucinations; within the reality that the film presents, *they exist*. Hari has memories, and experiences emotions. On the other hand, the visitors are not human. On her arm, Hari bears the mark of the hyperdermic needle with which she killed herself; Kris blasts her into space, but another Hari appears; Hari tries to kill herself by drinking liquid oxygen, but her body regenerates itself.

The visitors exist but are not human. They cannot exist apart from the ocean of Solaris. Nevertheless, there are some aspects of the astronauts' experiences which are comparable to the experiences of hallucination which we have so far discussed. In his

[313] See Dillon, S. (2006) *The Solaris Effect: Art and Artifice in Contemporary American Film*, Austin: University of Texas Press., p.10

recorded message Gibrian, Kris's astronaut colleague who killed himself, says, 'Kris, know that this isn't madness. To be more exact, all this has to do with conscience.' In the discussion in the library, Hari defends Kris, accusing Snauth and Sartorius: 'You treat us as something alien, interfering. Yet we are you yourselves, your own conscience.' Linda's hallucinations of Martin in *Track 29* and Joe's hallucinations of Jarinda in *Esta Noite Encarnarei no Teu Cadáver* are also expressions of guilty conscience. *Solaris* is a love story about a man who feels guilt over his wife's suicide ten years earlier. The science-fiction context enables his memory of her to become a physical reality, facilitating a romance between the living and the dead; Kris falls in love with a memory.

Virtual reality

Influenced by post-modernist theory, some science-fiction genre films present dystopian visions of the near future, in which reality is indistinguishable from illusion. There was a wave of such films as the millennium approached — *Twelve Monkeys* (1995), *Strange Days* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1995), *The Truman Show* (1998), *The Matrix* (Andy and Lana Wachowski, 1999), *eXistenZ* (David Cronenberg, 1999). In the alternative near future of 1999 which *Strange Days* presents, a new technology called the 'wire' has emerged on the black-market. An intricate recording device is placed over the subject's head which records this person's experiences. Using a playback device, a consumer can then experience a few minutes from another person's past, as though they were that person. These illicit recordings of actual perceptions are consumed as vicarious experience, technologically enhanced representations of imagination — a superior, more vivid, more realistic, more visceral alternative to the images of human imagination.

As we have seen, the narrative of *Twelve Monkeys* is open to dual interpretations. On the one hand we grant credence to the science-fiction narrative, and James Cole is a time traveller from the future, sent back to 1990 to gather information about the Army of the Twelve Monkeys, who in 1996 will be responsible for releasing a deadly virus into the atmosphere which will kill five billion people and force the remainder of the earth's inhabitants into the earth's core. In which case the tooth which he extracts really does contain a tracking device, with which the people in the future track his movements. That he is from the future also explains the fact that he is able to predict that the boy in the news, who is believed to have fallen down a well, is actually hiding in a barn, and that the bullet extracted from his leg is from World War I. The alternative explanation is that Cole is a paranoid schizophrenic and all of the above is a meticulously constructed fantasy world. In which case, the scenes presenting the future — which Cole believes is the present — in which he is briefed by scientists on his mission, are hallucinations. At the outset Cole is convinced that he is a time traveller from the future, while his psychiatrist, Catherine Railly, believes he is deluded, but nevertheless has 'the strangest feeling' she has met him before. Subsequent narrative developments — he vanishes in the woods when the police close in to arrest him, the bullet extracted from his leg — convince Catherine of the veracity of his claims, while Cole comes to believe that he is 'mentally divergent'. Upon returning to the future, he challenges the scientists at his bedside: 'You people don't exist. You can't travel back in time!...You're not here, you can't trick me. You're in my mind. I am insane and you are my insanity.' Thus *Twelve Monkeys* presents a dual structure which opposes the science-fiction narrative of a time-traveller with the elaborate fantasy of a paranoid schizophrenic. The film does not impose one

interpretation on the spectator; rather, the spectator's understanding may shift from one interpretation to another and back again. Indeed, it seems the intention is to keep both interpretative poles in something approaching a state of perpetual oscillation. (Nevertheless, one feels Gilliam would sooner admit the fantasy of time travel than the reality of madness.)

eXistenZ opens with a seminar attended by computer game enthusiasts. Game designer, Alegra Gellar, introduces her new game, eXistenZ, and invites twelve volunteers to play. But the demonstration is sabotaged when an assassin shoots her. The security guard, Pikel, helps her to escape. Alegra fears that her game was damaged in the disruption and the only way to know for sure is to play the game with Pikel. When they finally plug themselves into her pod and enter the game, it seems we leave the present and enter the imaginary game world of eXistenZ. In the game they discover a diseased pod. Submitting to a 'game urge', Alegra ports into the pod, and immediately senses that something is wrong. When Pikel cuts the cord to free her from the pod, mayhem breaks out and they again exit the game. Back in the hotel room, Alegra believes they have brought the disease back from the game; Pikel is confused ('How can a game event emerge into real life?'). A band of militants suddenly appear and destroy Alegra's pod. Pikel reassures her, explaining that he thinks they are still in the game. In an abrupt finale, Pikel reveals to Alegra that it has been his mission all along to assassinate her; Alegra kills him and raises her hands triumphantly, proclaiming victory in the game. Only now, in the film's epilogue, do we finally arrive in the present: everything hitherto has occurred in the imaginary world of the computer game, 'Transcendence'. Alegra, Pikel, and everyone they have encountered, were participants in a collective game of Transcendence. The game

designer, Yuri, discreetly confides to his assistant his anxiety about the 'anti-game theme' of the demonstration. On their way out, Pikel and Alegra assassinate Yuri. At the door they encounter the young Chinese who played the waiter in the game. He begs them not to shoot, before asking, 'Tell me, are we still in the game?' This final line thus self-reflexively acknowledges the film's theme of uncertainty about the integrity of reality in an age of cyber-technology.

Duped from the outset, we imagine that the opening scene of the seminar represents the present and that when Alegra and Pikel play eXistenZ we leave the present and enter an irreal world. The epilogue reveals that the entire narrative has unfolded within an imaginary game world. Upon reflection, this makes perfect sense. From the outset (what we take for) the present is characterised by an artificiality which is only amplified when the heroes enter eXistenZ. The signs are present throughout, but we have disregarded them: the gun with which the young assassin shoots Alegra is made of bone, and the bullet is a tooth (the gun which Pikel, in eXistenZ, subsequently constructs, and with which he kills the Chinese waiter, is also made of bone and fires teeth). The narrative draws excessive attention to the process of character nomination: when Alegra first speaks Pikel's name, he asks 'How did you know my name?' and she points out that he is wearing a name badge; Alegra calls the gas station attendant by the name on his badge, 'Gas', a generic game-name. In eXistenZ, Alegra stresses that it is often necessary to use a character's name when addressing him/her. When urging Pikel to play eXistenZ, Alegra says, 'the only way to find out if the game is damaged or not is to play eXistenZ with someone friendly. Are you friendly or not?', thus repeating verbatim the phrase that she had used previously, when convincing him to get a bioport installed. In eXistenZ, Alegra

explains that it is sometimes necessary to deliver a specific line for the game to proceed. Thus, when the epilogue reveals the first part of the film to have been part of a game, we recognise Alegra's repetition of her question — 'Are you friendly or not?' — as characteristic game behaviour. When Pikel and Alegra return from the game to the hotel room, it becomes increasingly apparent that what we have taken for the present is in fact an imaginary game world. This aspect of *eXistenZ*, by which the film dupes the spectator into accepting an irreal world for reality, calls to mind the elaborate tricks of *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and *The Saragossa Manuscript*, only here it is not a dream which we mistake for reality, but the virtual reality of a computer game.

In these three films from the nineties, one can discern significant consistencies around themes of technology, imagination and memory. From the 'wire' experience of *Strange Days* to the virtual reality of *eXistenZ*, in the modern or futuristic worlds that these films present, technology supplants human imagination. But aside from these interesting modern developments in representations of imagination, generally speaking, characters who experience hallucinations can broadly be divided into types.

Psychics

The presence of characters who possess psychic powers virtually dictates representations of imagination. We ought to distinguish here between premonitory acts of imagination — logical, though perhaps paranoid, extrapolations from the evidence of a present situation — and the irrational force of psychic power. When, for instance, in *Suspicion* Lina has a vision of Johnny murdering Beaky, this is not a psychic act, but a premonition based on her reasonable suspicion of Johnny — it

originates in a reasonable process of logical deduction. By contrast, the visions of psychic characters emerge inexplicably from an irrational source. The other important distinction is that the lucid premonitions of characters such as Lina may or may not be realised (Johnny doesn't push Beaky from the cliff. And though Beaky subsequently dies, we cannot be certain that Johnny killed him), while the visions of the psychic invariably *actually* transpire — either simultaneously with the experience of the vision or at a subsequent time.

At the end of the *Twin Peaks* Pilot episode (ABC, 1990), sitting on her couch in a meditative repose, grieving mother Sara Palmer experiences a vision in which she assumes the perspective of a figure walking through the forest at night, lighting the way with a torch. She shrieks as she visualises a gloved hand retrieving her daughter's necklace from beneath a rock. In *The Shining*, able to 'shine', Danny sees ghosts and shares a telepathic ability with Mr Halloran. When Halloran is showing Wendy around the provisions room he turns to Danny and asks, 'How'd you like some ice cream, Doc?' Halloran now continues speaking to Wendy, and it is clear that she did not see or hear his exchange with Danny: Halloran did not speak, but nevertheless — inexplicably — communicated his question to Danny. Shortly afterwards, Halloran really does invite Danny for an ice cream. Thus, this is not simply an act of imagination, but of telepathy. Later, as Jack becomes increasingly psychotic at the Overlook, Halloran has a portentous vision warning of trouble at the hotel. We see a shot of the open door of room 237 and then a shot of Danny, catatonic and dribbling, accompanied by a high-pitched sound effect with a heartbeat rhythm which seems to emphasise Halloran's subjective experience of this vision.

In *The Fury*, Gillian has several visions involving Robin, a boy, whom she has not yet met, who shares her powers. Her visions are dependent upon physical contact; the person with whom she is in physical contact — deliberately or coincidentally — becomes a vehicle for the emergence of her visions. In each case, the experience is physically distressing for the person from whom she draws the vision. Her visions depict events that occur elsewhere and which seem to be concurrent with her acts of imagining. In *The Deadzone*, Johnny also experiences psychic visions when he makes hand to hand contact with a person. Like Gillian, Johnny is overwhelmed by his visions and tightly grips the arm of the person from whom he draws the vision; as with Gillian's visions, the person whose hand is gripped, in the present, frequently becomes anxious, and tries unsuccessfully to free her hand. But Johnny's visions do not cause excessive physical harm to the person from whom they are drawn; rather, the visions seem to cause Johnny himself distress. (He explains to his father, 'When I have the spells, it's like I'm dying inside.') The visions represent: events which occurred in the distant past (Dr Weizak as a child being smuggled to safety in the midst of a WWII skirmish), scenes from the recent past (the young woman murdered in the gazebo), something which is occurring in the present or will occur in the immediate future (the girl in the burning house), and even more distant futures (Stillson as President).

The majority of cinema's psychic characters are to be found either in the context of the horror genre — where their powers are more or less vaguely associated with supernatural forces (*The Shining*) — or in a science-fiction context — in which case their powers are explained as, for instance, a medical experiment that went wrong or the consequence of a chemical accident (*The Fury*, *The Deadzone*). The experience

of all psychic visions in cinema involves an essential violence. The visions lacerate conscious attention, usually involuntarily, and the experience is often traumatic for the imagining subject, the content of the visions invariably being horrific or distressing.

War neuroses

Another group of characters who experience hallucinations are war veterans who are suffering from war neuroses or post-traumatic stress disorder. In *A Matter of Life and Death*, after the first hallucinatory episode in which he meets Conductor 53 and rejects the ruling that he has died, in his subsequent hallucinations Peter receives the conductor again, prepares for his appeal, and finally attends the trial itself; meanwhile, in the real world, he is cared for by June and his doctor, Frank. Peter seems to recognise the irreality of his hallucinations but cannot prevent them. On several occasions when the conductor visits him, time in the present halts. These exchanges occur within the physical space, but outside the time of the present. After his first meeting with the conductor, while Peter sleeps in the armchair in Frank's library and Frank and June play table tennis, the conductor appears again. Peter rings the bell to alert Frank that he is having 'a visit', but the bell makes no sound. When he rushes out to tell Frank and June, he finds them frozen still. They will not become re-animated and hear the bell until the conductor departs. At the end of this second visit, the conductor announces that he'd like to borrow Peter's *My Best Chess Games* book, and in the exchange that follows ('It's not mine; it belongs to the doctor — Oh, doctors! — What about them? — They give me a great deal of trouble in my job') the conductor seems to allude to the artifice of the hallucination. His admission that in

his job doctors cause him ‘a great deal of trouble’, explicitly articulates the central opposition: Dr Reeves/conductor, living/dead, reality/hallucination.

The film makes abundantly apparent the gulf between Peter’s hallucinatory world and the reality of the present. However, the developments Peter reports in the hallucinatory world correspond to the development of his illness, so that the world of the hallucination becomes a parallel universe, in which the trial for Peter’s life is a figure for the actual mortal threat which his illness poses. In conversation with Dr McQueen, Frank emphasises the elaborate intricacy of Peter’s hallucinations:

> The boy has a fine mind...That’s the trouble; it’s too *good* a mind. A weak mind isn’t strong enough to hurt itself...And he’s had several talks with this heavenly messenger, hallucinations of course, but you never saw such an imagination!...Here’s the interesting point: he never steps outside the limits of his own imagination...Nothing he imagines is entirely fantastic; it’s invention, but logical invention.

Frank’s insistence that within Peter’s madness there is reason is consistent with the seventeenth-century English philosopher John Locke’s understanding of madness: ‘“Mad men,” explained Locke, “put wrong ideas together, and so make wrong Propositions, but argue and reason right from them.” ’[314] But despite his hallucinations, and despite his internment in an asylum, the film’s treatment of Peter’s madness remains discreet throughout. June and Frank are utterly supportive from the outset. Frank takes care to encourage Peter, not only by behaving as though his

[314] John Locke, quoted in Porter, R. (2002) *Madness, a Brief History*, p.60.

hallucinations were real, but by remaining positive throughout, even when Peter is on the point of despair (when, with the trial imminent, he has still not appointed a defence counsel). Frank approaches the whole affair with characteristic English confidence, and determined optimism. Peter is never treated as a madman. It is taken for granted that his condition is temporary. His illness is never understood outside the context of the fact that he is a war hero. Frank's irrepressible assurance in Peter's eventual recovery to a great extent tempers our appreciation of the severity of his condition.

Though *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946) confronts the pressing contemporary issue of war neuroses, the theme is raised in the context of a light-hearted romantic fantasy. We find a very different depiction of a veteran's post-war experience in *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989).[315] The film presents the story of Ron Kovic, a paralysed Vietnam veteran, who, after a difficult return to life in the United States, eventually becomes an instrumental figure in the anti-war movement. The scene we are here concerned with is when Ron hesitates while speaking before the local community at a veterans' day parade, and is unable to continue. In order for us to appreciate the full significance of this scene, an excursus is necessary to establish some relevant themes and narrative events. The beginning of the film presents a substantial overview of Ron's life in small town America, prior to going to fight in Vietnam. As a child he played war games with his friends in the woods, waved the American flag at a veterans' day parade as he perched on his father's shoulders, and hit a homerun at baseball. Upon leaving school he enlists. His friend Stevie cautions him, 'You could get killed over there.' Ron's experience of war is harrowing. Nervous and

[315] We find hallucinations of war veterans in *Ryan's Daughter* and *Cross of Iron* also.

frightened, his platoon fire upon a house, massacring women and children whom they imagined were enemy soldiers. They retreat under enemy fire, and Ron accidentally kills one of his own soldiers. Subsequently, Ron is shot, leaving him paralysed from the waist down.

During his convalescence, Ron's exchanges with the black male nurses mark significant points in challenging his blind patriotism. Upon seeing news coverage of anti-war demonstrations on television, he expresses his disgust to nurse Willie: 'Love it or leave it you fuckin' bastards! ... They're burning the goddamn flag, man!' Later, Willie tries to tell Ron about the civil rights movement:

> You don't know shit about what's really happening in this country. It ain't about burnin' the flag and Vietnam, man. Why we fight for rights over there, when we ain't got no rights at home? It's about Detroit and Newark, man. It's about racism, man!

We have seen that during his convalescence, walking on his crutches, Ron gets carried away and falls, badly breaking his leg. Having been left strapped to his bed, staring at his own vomit, when the nurses finally respond to his distress calls, Ron is abusive. He shouts at Marvin,

> 'I am a Vietnam veteran. I fought for my country. I deserve to be treated with ... decency! ... I earned that right you fuck!'
>
> 'Vietnam don't mean nothing to me, man, any of these other people,' Marvin replies, aggressively. 'You got it? You can take your Vietnam and ...'

Upon returning home, Ron's patriotism, his belief in the war, is slowly vitiated through his day to day experiences, as he gradually realises that the American people — many of the local community, and even members of his own family — are against the war. His ex-school-friend Stevie, explains, 'People here, they don't give a shit about the war [...] It's all bullshit anyway [...] Got the shit kicked out of us, for what, huh? [...] It was you who bought that communist bullshit, Ronnie.' At a family dinner, Ron condemns the anti-war demonstrations, appealing to his mother, 'They burned the flag and they demonstrated against us ... They have no respect ... People are dying every day over there and nobody back here even seems to care. It's a bunch of goddamn shit if you ask me ... love it or leave it.' His younger brother Tommy excuses himself and when Ron enquires what the matter is, he is astounded to learn that Tommy 'doesn't believe in the war'. Affronted, Ron challenges him: 'You wanna burn the flag? ... You wanna bring down this country? Love it or leave it Tommy. You know, you can just love it or leave it.' Tommy leaves and Ron shouts after him, 'I volunteered, Tommy! You don't know what you're talking about! Where were you? Were you there? Were you there? You can just love it or leave it, Tommy!' At various points throughout the film, from before the war until this scene at dinner, Ron has recourse to his patriotic mantra, 'love it or leave it!' While he seems to genuinely mean it when he impotently chastises the anti-war demonstrators on the hospital television, by the time of his argument with Tommy, Ron's futile repetition of this slogan has become pathetic, and signifies the wilting stagnation of his political outlook in relation to mainstream American public opinion.

During his public address to the assembled local community at the 4th July veteran's day parade, Ron falters, and in the silence, a crying baby is heard offscreen. (Though

the baby's crying continues on the soundtrack, at no stage does it appear on screen.) The sound of a helicopter emerges, gaining prominence. The baby's screaming is reverberated and becomes horrific. As Ron looks out at the crowd, the expressions on the faces of the audience — knowing solidarity, uncomfortable embarrassment, pity, respect, anxiety, encouragement — reveal varied positions on the ethics of the war, though all are united in their sympathy for Ron. The baby's horrific screaming continues. The sound of the helicopter, now prominent, comes into focus, and though we do not see it and no one in the crowd looks up to the sky, the trajectory of the sound suggests that a helicopter is passing overhead. As its sound gradually recedes, we cut to the sky, and the camera pans across clouds in a blue sky, but we see no helicopter. There is no helicopter. It appears the baby's crying evokes memories of the women and children he and his platoon massacred in Vietnam.[316] While the original sound of the crying baby may be genuine, its horrific distortion is certainly an image of Ron's imagination. This moment marks a significant point in the narrative. The process by which Ron's blind patriotism and ideological commitment to the war are brought into question, as we have seen, is a slow one. Many years later, after a gradual but profound transformation of his outlook, Ron becomes a significant figure in the anti-war movement. This scene of him clamming up during his veteran's day address, in which he is expected to deliver a rousing patriotic message to the local community, clearly presages his ultimate emphatic disillusionment.

[316] In a subsequent scene the sound of the crying baby of a Mexican prostitute, in whose bed he is sleeping, seems to influence the content of Ron's nightmare about the massacred Vietnamese women and children.

Genuine hallucinations and states of madness

In cinema, representations of imagination frequently provide access to the subjectivity of deranged characters. While characters whom we would take to be 'normal' or sane may experience misperceptions or drug-induced visions, genuine hallucinations are typically experienced by characters who are deranged, or who are, for whatever reason, becoming, or temporarily become, deranged. In *The Bodyguard* (Mick Jackson, 1992), singer and actress, Rachel Marron, is the target of a psychopath and recipient of a number of threatening letters, all composed from letters cut from magazines and newspapers. At the Oscars, Rachel is presenting an award with an Englishman. When the Englishman opens the envelope to read the nominees, we cut between close shots of Rachel and the envelope being opened. Then, as the envelope is opened, in place of the card listing the nominees, Rachel momentarily imagines another of the threatening letters she has been receiving. She flees the stage in hysterics. This scene is the culminating point of the pressure on her: the obsession with security, the threats upon her life, have driven Rachel to the point where she sees things that are not there.

In *Odd Man Out*, Johnny hallucinates while hiding out at the artist's studio. The sound becomes reverberant and the camera movement creates a dizzying effect while framing him in close-up. A point-of-view shot presents his distorted perspective — an expressionistic, obscured view of the artist's studio, populated by ghoulish portraits. One by one the portraits come off the wall towards him in limpid, hologram-like forms, assembling themselves in rows before him. Then Johnny has a vision of Father Tom, the priest whom he knew as a child; he addresses the vision aloud. The others observe as he recites biblical scripture, as though addressing a

congregation. But the fact that he has been shot and has lost blood only partly accounts for Johnny's delirium; we must also consider that, prior to this, the film presented him as being psychologically flawed: en-route to the robbery there are the expressionistic, oblique-angled point-of-view shots of the cityscape from the moving vehicle; and at a crucial moment, as the gang flee the bank after the robbery, Johnny suffers another spell — he freezes, seizes up, cannot place one foot before the other to descend the steps to the getaway car.

In *Fire Walk With Me* Laura Palmer is sexually abused by a monstrous creature, Bob. Bob is a horrific construction of her imagination, by which she hides from herself the fact that her father, Leland, is abusing her. Usually Laura sees Leland as Leland, but at certain moments — when he sexually abuses her, and when she returns home to discover him in her bedroom — he appears as Bob. If Laura is deranged, it is certainly not her fault, but the fact is that she has constructed an alternative reality (she is sincere when she tells Harold, 'Bob is real'). The film chronicles the gradual disintegration of this psychic construct, culminating in her horrific confrontation with Bob/Leland in the derelict railway car. Laura's delusion is clearly something quite distinct from the instances of misperception discussed at the start of this chapter.

We find an analogous case in *Spider*. Mr Clegg is lying in bed when his door opens and, instead of Mrs Wilkinson (Lynn Redgrave), the female staff nurse at the care home at which he is resident, the young Yvonne Wilkinson (Miranda Richardson) enters — his father's mistress, the tart in the leopard-skin coat, swigging spirits from a bottle. Again we must distinguish this from cases of misperception such as Winnie's in *Sabotage* (discussed above), which is momentary. Clegg has a serious mental

health problem, and his horrific misperception prompts him to posit an identity between the two women. Henceforth he sees Yvonne Wilkinson in place of Mrs Wilkinson; he forms a genuine belief that Mrs Wilkinson *is* Yvonne Wilkinson.[317] This identifying of one person with another, to the point that the mistaken person assumes a complete corporeal identification with the other, is a case of delusional mistaken identity. Clegg's identification of the two women is ultimately revealed to be a horrific mistake: Mrs Wilkinson *is not* Yvonne Wilkinson: when Clegg enters her room at night and stands over her with a hammer and chisel, she appears as she had originally (Lynn Redgrave).

In *Raising Cain*, Carter (John Lithgow) is a schizophrenic who is dominated by his nastier twin persona, Cain (John Lithgow). Since Cain is a manifestation of Carter's imagination, Carter is the only character who is able to interact with him. Here De Palma takes the representation of madness to an extreme, by offering a literal embodiment of schizophrenia. But Dr Waldheim, the film's expert psychoanalyst, explains that Carter's is a case of multiple personality disorder. Cain regularly appears in order to perform an act or take a decision which Carter could not effect alone, but when Cain is about to murder the young mother in the public toilets, a young boy appears and says, 'I know what you're going to do. It's a bad thing, and

[317] All this is complicated by the fact that Spider's mother and Yvonne Wilkinson are both played by Miranda Richardson. This seems to imply that perhaps Yvonne Wilkinson never existed at all, that, jealous of his mother's affection for his father, the young Spider created Yvonne Wilkinson in order to separate off and demonise the aspects of his mother that were unrelated to her exclusive devotion to him. For an interesting discussion of the young Spider's confused understanding of his mother in her relation to him and to his father, and how this confusion is manifest in the film in the opposition between the mother and Yvonne Wilkinson and the subsequent identification of the father's mistress with the supervisor at the adult Clegg's care home, see:

Skalr, J. & A. Sabbadini (2008) 'David Cronenberg's *Spider*: Between confusion and fragmentation,' International Journal of Psychoanalysis, Vol. 89, p.429

I'm going to tell.' Carter's subsequent interview with Waldheimer confirms that this was Josh, a further personality, and therefore another embodiment of Carter/Cain's imagination.

If our discussion is to be comprehensive, we must also consider to what extent religious visions and experiences with ghosts can be classified as hallucinations.

The divine

In *Bad Lieutenant* (Abel Ferrara, 1992) the hero quickly gets into serious debt gambling on the baseball World Series. Already owing $60,000, he tells his bookie friend he wants to put $60,000 on the final game. His friend is concerned for him and tells him he cannot take the bet. He leaves him his contact's number so that he can place the bet himself. Aware of the gravity of the lieutenant's situation, he is clearly anxious that the debt should not increase, and reminds the lieutenant that there is a $50,000 reward for the policeman who catches the men who raped and profanely assaulted a nun in a church. Clearly, the lieutenant ought to cut his losses and focus on the case — if he could secure the reward money, the $10,000 he would still owe the bookie might be raised somehow — but by now the lieutenant has lost touch with reality and is spiralling out of control in a drug- and alcohol-fuelled death drive. In a stupor, he phones the bookie and insists that he accept his bet, threatening that if he doesn't, he will receive no payment whatsoever. As he listens on and off to the final game of the series on his car radio, it slowly becomes clear that his team has lost. He now owes $120,000 to a ruthless bookmaker whom he has no means of paying. In a desperate state, he arrives at the church to plead with the raped nun to give him information about her assailants (perhaps if he could get the reward and offer the

bookmaker $50,000 his life might be saved). He tells the nun that, since the culprits are juveniles, their punishment will be lenient; he will ensure that real justice is exacted. It might be that he says this just in order to encourage her to talk; but, if his claim is sincere, this suggests that, despite his own dire personal problems, he is not interested in the reward money, has more or less accepted his fate, and is now somehow trying to make amends for his misdeeds and abuse of power by doing something which he understands to be honourable. However, the nun insists she has forgiven her attackers, advises him to pray to God, and leaves. The lieutenant drops to his knees and cries out in impotent desperation. Then a vision of Christ appears before him, wearing a crown of thorns and bleeding from the wounds of the Passion. The lieutenant addresses Him, begs Him to speak, then repeatedly cries accusingly, 'Where were you?' He apologises, admits to his wrongdoing and laments that he is weak. He begs Christ to help him, crawls towards Him on his hands and knees and kisses His bloody feet. He looks up to find an old black woman looking down at him. It seems that the lieutenant, in his drug-, alcohol- and gambling-fuelled crisis, imagines a vision of Christ where in fact an old woman is standing. In a sense, his desperate prayers are answered, because she provides the breakthrough for the case. She identifies the culprits and leads him to them. Thus, it seems, all is not lost — the lieutenant will receive the reward money after all, and the money, though it would by no means solve all of his problems, might just save his life. However, after smoking crack with the two culprits and then censuring them at gunpoint in the car, he takes them to a coach station, gives them the shrine full of money that he earlier obtained from an acquaintance, and orders them to board the bus and leave the city because 'your life ain't worth shit in this town.' He thus renounces the reward money that might have saved his life, and, perhaps feeling some sympathy or connection with the

young men, trying to at last do something good, lets them go free — a warped act of redemption that is not without a perverse nobility. A short while later, in the film's final shot, he is gunned down in his car.

We will subsequently see that ghosts are often seen simultaneously by more than one character. Such a phenomenon challenges any thesis which would hope to explain away such experiences as purely imaginary. The same is also true of many representations of divine visions. In the second half of *La voie lactée*, we follow the story of Rodolphe and François, two heretics from another century. Having interrupted a ceremonial disinterment to voice their heretical views, they flee into the woods, pursued by those who are enforcing the contemporary religious dogma. There they change into clothes that they find at a riverside, and proceed through the woods, outfitted as hunters. In the pocket of the clothes he has stolen, Rodolphe discovers a crucifix, attached to rosary beads. He hurls them into the air and François shoots the beads with his rifle. Later, while they rest, a glorious light appears before them in the trees. They rise before a vision of the Virgin Mary, suspended amidst the trees, magnificently illuminated. Rodolphe kneels before her and she returns to him the rosary beads that François had earlier shot from the tree. When the vision recedes, François attempts to subdue his friend, reasoning, 'You're tired. It was a hallucination.' But Rodolphe is certain that it was the Virgin Mary, and presents to him the rosary beads as irrefutable evidence of the divine reality of the vision. Thus two characters experience a religious vision simultaneously. If an individual believes he has such an experience, one can always argue that he only imagined that this was so. Where two or more people share such an experience, however, we cannot so

easily explain away such experiences as imaginary. Representations of ghosts raise the same issue.

Ghosts

Should we understand belief in and interaction with ghosts as manifestations of imagination? Ghosts are often portrayed as essentially benevolent beings that are visible only to certain privileged characters, though they are capable of acting upon, affecting, or haunting characters who cannot see them. To argue that since, empirically speaking, ghosts do not exist, representations of ghosts in film must therefore be manifestations of imagination, is to neglect the obvious fact that films have no compulsion to respect the laws of empirical reality. If ghosts are merely imaginary beings, the hallucinations of mentally unstable characters, this fails to explain how they can affect those living characters who cannot see them. Rather, this latter is evidence of the fact of their actual existence within the vraisemblance of the film. Tom Ruffles' book *Ghost Images* (2004) will be an important point of reference throughout this section.

To grasp the relevance of ghosts to the present study, the question boils down to this: in the reality the films present, are ghosts purely imaginary beings, or do they actually exist? Whether the films present ghosts as existing or not, perception of and interaction with ghosts is typically limited to certain privileged characters. The question, then, is: are these privileged characters merely imagining, or not? This depends on the readiness of the filmmakers to admit the possibility of the supernatural. Some films leave us in no doubt that ghosts exist within the reality that the film presents. In *Beetlejuice* (Tim Burton, 1989), for instance, though the ghosts

of the young couple are visible only to the teenage girl, this cannot account for the adventures which the couple undertake alone — as, for instance, whenever they attempt to cross the threshold of their property, they enter a nightmarish, expressionistic, threatening landscape, populated by gruesome creatures. None of this has anything to do with the daughter's imagination. By contrast, in less fantastic depictions, emphasis is often placed on the mental fragility of those characters who perceive ghosts. In practice, both explanations often apply at once: ghosts exist, but those characters who interact with them are impressionable, vulnerable, or somehow unhinged.

Ruffles enumerates thirteen opposing categories according to which ghosts can be assigned, the first of which concerns their positional status: veridical (objective) or hallucination (subjective):[318]

> In the absence of unambiguous evidence it may be necessary to assign a level of probability based on the evidence. Doubt can be caused by failure to distinguish between objective apparitions and internally generated images that are objectified for the benefit of the viewer.[319]

Cases of 'selective appearance', when only one person is able to see a ghost though other people are present, 'hint strongly at mental disturbance.'[320] Filmmakers often play on the tension between opposing subjective and objective interpretations: ghosts

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[318] Ruffles, T. (2004) *Ghost Images*, London: McFarland & Company, Inc., p.55

[319] *Ibid*., pp.9-10

[320] *Ibid*. p.56

'can be rendered differently, and their subjectivity emphasised, by point of view, which can make them seem subjective even when there is evidence that they are objective.'[321] Ruffles notes that '[a] film might try to balance these possibilities so that it is not clear if phenomena are objective or subjective', citing *The Innocents* (1961), Jack Clayton's adaptation of Henry James's tale *The Turn of the Screw*, as the most compelling example of such a procedure.[322] *The Turn of the Screw* [323] is certainly a useful reference point in our discussion of cinema's representations of ghosts. While looking after two children, Miles and Flora, the governess, Miss Giddens, becomes utterly convinced of the existence of the ghosts of their former governess, Miss Jessel, and her lover, Peter Quint. She is convinced that both of the children can see the ghosts, who have corrupted them, and that the four of them together perform unspeakable acts of depravity. The effectiveness of the tale is all in the careful way James constructs the story, admitting a fundamental ambiguity as to the question of the existence of the ghosts. James imposes nothing; the reader is permitted the space to interpret the story as she pleases: either the ghosts of Quint and Miss Jessel exist or they do not. But it is the possibility that the ghosts may *not* exist that makes the tale truly harrowing. Near the end, when Flora takes refuge in Mrs Grose, instinctively cowering away from Miss Giddens in fear and suspicion, James suggests — a more unsettling notion than the actual existence of the ghosts — that all of Miss Giddens's suspicions, speculations, hypotheses, and interpretations of the most minute and apparently inconsequential gestures and actions, represent the

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[321] *Ibid*., p.65

[322] *Ibid.*, p.56.

[323] James, H. (1907-1909) *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Aspern Papers*, London: Penguin.

meticulously constructed imaginary reality of a paranoiac. It is those ghost stories which tend toward this latter interpretation which most interest us.

Let us consider more closely these few characters who are so privileged as to be able to see and interact with ghosts. What do they have in common? Are they psychologically predisposed to the perception of ghosts due to some kind of trauma, or spiritual perspicacity? If ghosts are to be interpreted as subjective, writes Ruffles, 'the ghostly existence could be caused by a crisis'.[324]

The bereaved

Characters who encounter ghosts are frequently suffering from a recent bereavement.[325] In *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1943) Captain Gregg, whose house the young widow Lucy Muir moves into, is visible only to her. While Ruffles argues that Gregg's ghost is objective, I feel that this is one of the many films in which there is a tension between subjective and objective interpretations of the ghost. Though Gregg initially tries to repel her from his house, he and Lucy ultimately develop a relationship. Gregg helps her to regain confidence; he dictates to her the stories of his life at sea, which Lucy subsequently publishes. Gradually Gregg encourages Lucy to exercise greater liberty. Then, shortly after seeing Lucy and her suitor Farley kiss, Gregg leaves in the middle of the night, saying goodbye to Lucy while she sleeps. He must go now and let her live her life; she has chosen life. Finally he approaches her bed, instructs her to listen carefully (although she is asleep), and tells her that he has been a dream: he is not real; *she* wrote the

[324] *Ghost Images*, p.56

[325] See Ruffles discussion of *Truly, Madly, Deeply* (Anthony Minghella, 1990) and *Kiss Me Goodbye* (Robert Mulligan, 1982) in *Ghost Images*, pp.93-94

book, not him. Later, when Lucy's grown-up daughter, Anna, visits her, Lucy is startled when she mentions Captain Gregg, and confides that she was in love with him. Lucy explains that Gregg was a dream, he wasn't real. He used to speak to her sometimes; he was there for about a year. 'But how could we both have the same dream?' Anna asks. Lucy explains that she probably told Anna her dream, and Anna adopted it as her own. Thus Gregg appears to be a manifestation of Lucy's imagination, a companion who assisted her through the initial years of widowhood, and then left when she was ready to continue her life without his assistance. But this cannot account for several occurrences in the film which, Ruffles argues, point towards the objective existence of Gregg's ghost. In one scene, though they cannot see him, Gregg forcefully repels Lucy's bothersome in-laws from the house, this suggesting that he is a selectively witnessed ghost rather than Lucy's subjective hallucination. Ruffles notes that in the dénouement, in which the young Lucy rises in spirit form from the elderly Mrs Muir's body to finally be reunited with Gregg's ghost, Lucy's spirit 'could have no meaning in terms of her point of view, only the audience's, suggesting that it is objective, and that Captain Gregg also exists.'[326]

In *Fanny och Alexander* (Ingmar Bergman, 1983) ghosts are a manifestation of the child Alexander's imagination. Ruffles identifies it as a common trope that ghosts are frequently only perceived by children in films: 'This plays on the idea that psychic ability is something that children possess, losing it as they become hardened by age […] one needs purity of heart and a certain openness and innocence untainted by doubt to see them.'[327] Alexander encounters the ghost of his dead father Oscar several

[326] *Ghost Images*, p.92

[327] *Ibid*., pp.87-88

times. When Oscar's ghost first appears, it is Fanny who sees him first of all. She fetches Alexander, and they both see him together. As with the divine visions in *La voie lactée*, attempts to understand the seeing of ghosts as purely imaginary experiences are undermined by a sequence such as this, in which two characters see the ghost simultaneously. Ruffles puts forth the logical general rule that the more people who see a ghost, 'the more likely is its reality to be accepted.'[328] Henceforth it is only Alexander who sees ghosts (although the Grandmother encounters Oscar in a dream). Oscar's ghost appears at significant moments in Alexander's life: he next appears when Edvard the Bishop leads the family in a prayer, after Emilie has announced that she will marry him; he reappears at the wedding, while his mother recites her vows. Staying with his Uncle Isaac, who has rescued the children from the Bishop, at night Alexander again encounters Oscar's ghost, and begs him to kill the bishop. We then cut to a scene between Emilie and the Bishop, in which Emilie allows him to drink a bowl of soup which is drugged.

The 'gifted'

The other group of characters who encounter ghosts can be broadly classified as the 'gifted'. Such characters possess a supernatural gift — though this ability is sometimes presented as a curse. In *Dragonwyck* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1946), the existence of ghosts is associated with a family legend; the ability to perceive ghosts is determined by blood. Miranda goes to stay with her distant relative Nicholas at his family's castle, Dragonwyck. She soon learns from the servant, Magda, that the castle is haunted by Nicholas's grandmother, a singing, harpsichord-playing ghost. Magda advises her that if and when the ghost should return and play the harpsichord,

[328] *Ibid*., p.56

only Nicholas and his daughter Katrine will be able to hear her. The night Nicholas poisons his wife, the ghost appears, and Katrine listens on the stairs. As Magda predicted, Katrine is able — as is the spectator — to hear the music, but Miranda, who comes to investigate, hears nothing.

In *The Shining*, while exploring the endless corridors of the Overlook Hotel, Danny encounters the ghosts of the daughters of former caretaker, Delbert Grady, whom Grady butchered with an axe. Danny's unhinged father, current caretaker Jack, also sees ghosts from Grady's era. Since Jack is clearly deranged, the rich parallel world of the 1920s which he visits might be understood as a fantastic imaginary construction. But again, such a hypothesis cannot account for various occurrences, as, for instance, when Grady (a ghost) apparently unbolts the door to let Jack out of the storeroom in which Wendy has locked him. This intervention undermines any understanding that Grady is a purely imaginary being; he here becomes an agent, intervening in the present of the diegetic world. Later, when Wendy encounters a wounded guest, apparently one of Grady's victims, this too points to the actual existence of the ghosts, since, unlike Jack, Wendy is not deranged. Ruffles observes, 'the film could be showing both subjective and objective phenomena but failing to cue the audience as to which is which. Where the two are incompatible, their clash could be regarded as a post-modernist game.'[329] The perceived positional status of the ghosts undergoes change as the film develops. It seems at first that the ghosts are products of Danny's imagination, but by the end, when Wendy sees ghosts, the reality of the ghosts is unequivocal.[330]

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[329] *Ibid*., p.183

[330] Films which represent angels raise similar questions about the positional status of these beings. At the end of *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1947) George Bailey has reached rock bottom and is

We have seen that in *Fanny och Alexander*, Alexander's exchanges with Oscar's ghost are a consequence of his bereavement and the excesses of his childish imagination. But it is not only Oscar's ghost that Alexander encounters. While his encounters with the ghost of his father are calm and relaxed, Alexander is haunted by other ghosts of his imagination. He tells the maid of his encounter with the ghosts of the bishop's dead wife and children, in which they told him that the bishop had locked them up, and that they perished trying to escape by tying sheets together and descending from the window. Upon learning of this, the bishop canes Alexander and locks him in the attic, where he really does encounter the ghosts of the bishop's two dead daughters, who give him a hostile reception, correcting his story about their deaths and expressing their concern about Alexander's hostility towards Edvard. The children are finally freed of the bishop's tyranny when their uncle helps them to escape, and Edvard subsequently perishes in a fire. But in the epilogue, the bishop's ghost appears behind Alexander, and malevolently trips him over and then kicks him while he is on the ground, cautioning him, 'You can't escape me.' Alexander's experiences with ghosts are the product of his childish imagination, and here Bergman captures an aspect of imagination peculiar to childhood, which is soon completely forgotten, but which, as we have seen in our discussion of the bereaved, can, in certain circumstances, be partially or temporarily revived in adult life.

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contemplating suicide when a man jumps from the bridge into the river; George dives in and rescues him. As they dry themselves off the stranger explains that he is an angel, who was sent to prevent George from killing himself. He then takes George on a tour of the town, showing him how different the community would have been — how much poorer — if he, George Bailey, had not lived. Of course, one could argue that this sequence represents a protracted hallucination, which functions to help George through his crisis. However, the opening sequence — in which an angel is assigned to help George in his time of need, for which he will be rewarded with a pair of wings — clearly establishes that the film unfolds in a verisimilitudinal context that posits angels as existing. It follows that the last half hour of the film is not George's hallucination but, within the verisimilitudinal context of the film, represents actual events.

Having thus considered the existential status of ghosts in a range of films, I maintain that, as opposed to the full-blown supernatural, in which ghosts become agents in the diegetic world, the representations which most interest us are those where ghosts seem to be products of a character's imagination. From our perspective, films which depict ghosts are less interesting to the extent that they admit the presence of the supernatural (*The Shining*), and more interesting to the extent that the perception of ghosts is psychologically determined. (In practice this means that the perception of ghosts is limited to one character.)

From our brief tour of cinema's ghosts we conclude that the capacity of ghosts to intervene in the physical environment of the present, and the fact that ghosts are sometimes perceived by more than one character, oblige us to admit the actual existence of ghosts within these films. It is not enough simply to say that ghosts are the imaginary creations of the bereaved or the gifted. While one might argue that the few characters who are so privileged as to be able to perceive and interact with ghosts are often presented as being mentally fragile, in most cases this cannot account for the specific interventions of ghosts in the physical environments of these films. While, as in the various representations of imagination which we have hitherto discussed, there does seem here to be a relation between imagination and madness, any such connection is tempered, since these narratives unfold within a generic framework which posits ghosts as existing, and is thus less realistic.

Conclusion to Part II

We have proposed the hypothesis that many representations of imagination in film — the imagined voices of the reasoning pragmatist, the obsessive questioning of the paranoiac, the various states of fantasy, dream, drug-induced visions, and genuine hallucinations — are, to a greater or lesser extent, discernible traces of madness. But is it absurd to posit a connection between the fantasies and pragmatic imaginings of ordinary characters and states of madness. Here we must consider precisely what constitutes an 'ordinary' character, and whether there is not already, in the most banal and unexceptional imaginings, a germ of madness. Indeed, one might measure states of madness by the extent to which the subject is able to maintain control of the images that occur to her.

While fantasies are essentially spontaneous, the subject nevertheless retains control over the content and development of her fantasy. In her imaginings the fantasist escapes reality, but the development and perpetuation of the fantasy at each step requires intentional willing. While the fantasy may rightly contain fantastic elements, each such element is intended. The fantasist reserves a pre-reflective knowledge of the fact that she is imagining. While on the one hand one need only consult one's experience to recognise that though fantasies develop in what we might call an 'intentional' fashion, and that, by definition fragile and vulnerable, the fantasy at each moment teeters on the threshold of annihilation — since it may be shattered instantaneously according to the immediate demands of the present — on the other hand, the *appearance* of fantasies, their coming into being, their very existence, is altogether less easy to account for. (To demonstrate this we need only consider the reader whose attention drifts from the words on the page. She perceives the words,

but her train of associative thought, prompted by the reading matter, has followed a different track. We can thus identify here a conflict within consciousness. The reader might have preferred to continue reading uninterrupted, but, in spite of herself, this intention is undermined.)

Closer to madness, it seemed, was the 'fascination' and 'fatality' of dreams.[331] Often giving expression to deep wishes or anxieties, dreams nevertheless frequently appear to us as bizarre, irrational, nonsensical. According to Freud the absurd appearance is only superficial. During sleep the powerful defence system of the ego — which, always alert in waking consciousness, would prevent any such passage — is relaxed, enabling ideas which would otherwise not surface, to force their way into consciousness. But, such is the strength of the ego's censorship that it is only half-relaxed. It remains functioning to the extent that it distorts the repressed (infantile) wishes which arise from the unconscious. This is the function of the dream-work. Dream-content often appears bizarre and irrational, but one nevertheless perceives that it is somehow meaningful.

The visions of characters who are under the influence of narcotics also seemed to us to manifest traces of madness. Unlike the dreamer (who is, in Sartre's terms, in a state of 'unreflective consciousness'),[332] the hallucinations of the inebriated subject are experienced by a waking consciousness. Such hallucinations seem to manifest madness more comprehensively than do dream images. Someone may object that the fantasist is conscious also. But this is a different mode of consciousness altogether: the visions of the fantasist are wholly her creation, the development of the fantasy

[331] Sartre, J-P. (1940) *L'Imaginaire*, pp.168-69

[332] *Ibid*., p.162

entirely her responsibility. And if, as a consequence of some contingent circumstance in her physical environment, she is obliged to curtail the fantasy, this will occur instantaneously. By contrast, while typically the inebriated subject — excepting those cases in which she is unknowingly or unwillingly drugged — makes a conscious decision to become intoxicated, once a state of hallucinatory inebriation is reached, there is no turning back: her visions overwhelm her and she must endure the effects of her intoxication for its duration. Since the subject cannot instantly return to sober consciousness, the hallucinatory visions of the inebriated subject may manifest madness more completely than do either the waking fantasy or the dream.

Closer still to madness are ‘genuine hallucinations’. Unwilled (unlike the visions of the fantasist), appearing without chemical intoxication, the presence of such images signifies a pathological state. It is here that we find the most lucid connection between imagination and madness. The relation between themes of madness and representations of genuine hallucinations is tangible and explicit.

Conclusion

In Part I, maintaining a formal perspective, we found that by no means all representations of the past represent the mental images of memory. Flashback-for-narrative represents an autonomous animation of a recounted narrative. By comparing flashback duration to the time which seems to elapse in the present, we found that flashback-for-memory represents an analogue of the mental images of memory. We therefore distinguished act of memory from flashback-for-memory, act of memory representing the mental images of memory. Since hitherto neither filmmakers nor critics have insisted on this distinction, we found that the prompts and functions for act of memory were often consistent with those of flashback-for-memory. Detectives and innocent men such as Hitchcock's heroes, whom circumstances compel to become detectives, remember for pragmatic purposes. Then there are nostalgic subjects, such as Isak in *Wild Strawberries*. But when the remembering subject becomes fixated with the past, memory comes to signify obsession. Here we began to distinguish different character types — the obsessive, the guilt-ridden subject, the paranoiac, the pathological subject — and to argue that there was a relation between representations of mental images and themes of madness. Throughout Part II this became our central developing argument.

It is no surprise to find a correlation between representations of imagination and themes of madness. But then there are other characters — detectives, the suspicious who become paranoid, guilt-ridden subjects, war veterans who suffer 'flashbacks', the bereaved who are visited by apparitions, characters who take hallucinogenic drugs, etc. — who find themselves in situations which engender mental images. There is so much in cinema that is omitted and assumed, because it does not advance the

narrative. We know that all characters are capable of thought, and we thus assume that they can and do produce mental images according to the exigencies of their situation. It is not necessary, desirable or practical to know what each character is thinking at all times. Access to a character's thought is reserved for privileged characters. In providing access to what a character is thinking, cinema has various means: the close-up, the actor's eye movements and facial expressions, the reaction shot, what she says (though, of course, this may contradict what she thinks). The most reliable access to a character's subjective thoughts is through representations of mental images. Just as cinema selects certain actions for presentation and excludes others which are deemed unimportant, so, of all possible mental images it presents but a few. We have identified a definite correlation between filmic representations of mental images and themes of madness. Leaving aside for a moment those images which clearly signify madness, we find that mental images in cinema perform a gamut of other functions. Nevertheless, it seems to us that we cannot separate these other functions — pragmatism, guilt, obsession, paranoia, etc. — and the forms by which mental images are manifest — imagined voices, fantasy, dream, hallucination — from the context of cinema's representations of madness. Indeed we feel that the majority of cinema's representations of mental images are best understood in this context. At what point does the pragmatic thought of the detective — speculations and imaginary hypotheses, associations of different points of past — become paranoia or obsession? And if these latter are traces of madness, what of the subject who finds herself in a situation where such responses are not entirely irrational? If you are in no danger, yet you imagine that sinister forces oppose you and conspire against you, then you are clearly paranoid, and such thoughts may be interpreted as traces of madness. If sinister forces really are out to get you, what can we say of your imagining that this is

so? Such thoughts become rational only in response to an extreme situation. Thus extreme situations — whether these are brought about by the subject's own errors, misjudgements, crimes, or sins, or whether her situation is imposed on her from without — engender behaviour and thought processes which would otherwise signify insanity. We might, then, consider to what extent one's mental health is influenced by the exigencies of one's situation.

In the course of our discussion we have identified the various functions which mental images perform with basic character types. Let us review these. The nostalgic subject and the fantasist are both dreamers. Both are dissatisfied with the reality of the present and seek to escape it, the one in an idealised past, the other in utopian fantasy. The fantasist idly conjures utopian scenes, typically of romantic or sexual fulfilment, which she is unable to realise in reality. The nostalgic subject is often guilt-ridden: life has been a disappointment, she has made wrong decisions and been guilty of imprudence; she is dissatisfied with her situation and would like to escape it but is unable to undo her errors; she idealises the past and is disposed simply to reminisce.

The detective's use of memory is pragmatic. She returns to and examines the past in light of the present, takes one past image and compares it with another, seeks out continuities between several different points of past, establishes metonymic chains of association between memories — all in order the better to understand the present. She creates hypotheses, imagines herself where she is not and cannot be, conjectures, pursues probable chains of consequence, constructs hypothetical scenarios, rehearses

imaginary conversations. She considers the clues, assembles evidence and embellishes available facts with imagination.

But there are many forms of detection. The search may be entirely personal, introspective. The introspective subject revisits the past, reapproaches the same memory from different angles; she imagines past events at which she was not present, attempts to reconstitute the past by combining actual memories with imagined past scenes, based in part on knowledge and in part on logical speculation. She, too, juxtaposes different memories, establishes chains of association between different pasts. She, too, is in search of the truth, though not always to act in the present, but rather to better understand and to come to terms with the past.

The less control one exerts over the images that appear to one, the more one can speak of these images as manifestations of madness. When the detective's pragmatic speculations become excessive, she lapses into paranoia. The paranoiac obsessively recalls words uttered, fragments of phrases, images or gestures, searching for hidden meanings (often where there are none). She withdraws from her memories but is always lured back to them; she re-approaches her memories from different angles, aims to illuminate obscure aspects. With each new development in the present she obsessively returns to the past, reinterpreting it in light of the present. A voice from the past may startle her: she is about to open a door, but recalls a past utterance and changes her mind, suddenly overwhelmed by irrational doubt. Like the detective, she composes hypothetical situations, rehearses imaginary conversations. But while the detective's hypotheses are based on logical probabilities, the imaginary conversations of the paranoiac evidence the hyperbolic irrationality of morbid fixation. On the other

hand, her speculations are sometimes not without foundation; sinister forces really do oppose her, such that paranoia is a reasonable response to her situation. Here we see how ordinary characters can, in extraordinary situations, come to manifest symptoms of madness.

The guilt-ridden subject is haunted by the past. She recalls words and phrases uttered, images and gestures. She would like to escape, but finds the past every way she turns. The past seeks her out, creeps up on her, devours her from within. She rehearses imaginary dialogues with a voice of conscience; she may be prey to hallucinations, haunted by apparitions of her victims; occasionally her manifestations of guilt precede the guilty acts themselves. Amongst these guilt-ridden subjects are cinema's Raskolnikovs, those who imagine they can live with their crimes, but find that they cannot.

Then there are those characters who experience visions. Psychic and telepathic visions are generally limited to the horror and science-fiction genres. Such visions emerge from an irrational source, though science-fiction films often provide some outlandish justification for them. In films which depict ghosts, either ghosts exist, or they are imaginary beings, who are perceived only by imaginative children or the bereaved, or the psychologically unhinged. But here the imagining of ghosts and the existence of ghosts are often combined in a generic context in which verisimilitudinal standards of naturalism are attenuated. Drug-induced hallucinations are most interesting to the extent that they expose some latent aspect of the imagining subject's neurosis. Usually drug-induced hallucinations are experienced by characters who know that they are hallucinating. More interesting from our perspective are genuine,

spontaneous hallucinations. The hallucinating subject has lost control of the images that occur to her. Either she recognises the irreal as such, but is powerless to escape it, or the real and the irreal become for her indiscernible.

We have achieved a great deal in our exploration of cinema's representations of mental images, but there is much that remains to be done. Cinema's representations of mental images will be better understood in the context of such representations in other art forms. A survey of art, literature and theatre would surely enrich our argument. To better understand cinema's representations of mental images requires us to situate our discussion in a broader historical context. To what extent are there continuities between representations of mental images in the various arts? Consideration of works of literature, theatre and art would provide a contextual groundwork which might well place everything in a new light, prompt us to reorganise categories, enable us to sketch outlines of the historical development of representations of mental images and the extent of the differences between such representations which the ontological specificity of the various arts impose. But as well as aspiring toward a broader historical perspective, we should not ignore recent developments. In our discussion of *eXistenZ* and *Strange Days* in Chapter 7 we identified an interesting new development, by which the human imagination is supplanted by modern technological alternatives. What effect has new technology had on the representation of mental images? Indeed, more generally, what effect will virtual reality technology have on the status and function of human imagination? Has not cinema and the 'flashback' influenced our understanding of memory, if not the experience of memory itself?

But besides all this there are other, it seems to me, more important questions which transcend the scope of this study. In discussing cinema's representations of mental images, we have explored interesting aspects of the process, experience, function and representation of memory and imagination. This is to say that, leaving the 'cinema's representations of…' aside for a moment, the point of departure for this study was an initial interest in the image as a psychic reality. In extrapolating from this kernel a study of cinema, we encountered a fork in the road. Attracted by the bright lights of the screen, we advanced without looking back and, throughout, we have considered onscreen representations of mental images. The other path, which we did not choose, leads to the spectator who, like the characters on the screen — the detectives, dreamers, paranoiacs and obsessives — is a thinking — remembering, imagining — being, and though, in viewing the film, she is fascinated by the continuum of images, submerged in a rich bath of sound, she does not cease thinking. Each of us knows from experience that in watching a film, like the reader who finds that she has not understood the passage she has read while daydreaming, our attention may occasionally drift from the story. We continue to remember, imagine and fantasise while watching films, not only through the characters onscreen, but apart from them. A look, an expression, a tone of voice, an utterance, some notable — though often tenuous — similarity to her past experience can prompt a recollection or imagining in the spectator. The spectator's attention drifts from the unfolding narrative, her thoughts float in a nebulous zone, impervious to time or place. Inspired by an aspect of the film, she revisits some past scene of her life, and it can happen that by the time her attention returns to the screen she has understood some long-forgotten scene of her past in a new light. Perhaps an aspect of the film momentarily rekindles in her a sensation, a passion, an image, a feeling which she had quite forgotten. Of course

these possibilities depend to a large extent on the life experience, the mien, the personality of the individual spectator, but it is clear that this does not necessarily have to do with 'good' films. Jean-Louis Schefer, Victor Burgin, Jonathan Rosenbaum, and to some extent Stanley Cavell, each in his own way, have gone some way to exploring this territory.[333] In this study we have marched headlong in another direction, and our achievements are therefore remote from those of spectatorship studies. We have focused throughout on the evidence of the films themselves, but not because we are sceptical of the value of spectatorship's most profound subjectivism. On the contrary, our concentration on filmic examples is a simple consequence of the path we chose at the fork in the road.

[333] Schefer, J-L. from *L'Homme ordinaire du cinéma* (1980) and *Ça Cinéma* #21 (1980); Rosenbaum, J. (1994) *Moving Places*; Burgin, V. (2004) *The Remembered Film*, Cavell, S. (1971) *The World Viewed*.

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